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Can't punish people for not voting: SC

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Markets bearish as Sensex drops 700 pts from day's high

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In-form Gujarat Titans eye first home win vs KKR

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Women's quota, delimitation bill tabled

My guarantee that no injustice will be done to any Northern or Southern state: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Special session of Parliament, in New Delhi, Thursday —*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill to amend the women's reservation law was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Thursday after a division of votes, with 251 MPs supporting and 185 opposing it following a 40-minute debate.

The proposed reform seeks to reserve one-third of seats in Parliament and state assemblies for women, raising their representation in the Lok Sabha from about 14 per cent to nearly a third. Its implementation is tied to a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 Census, which could expand the Lower House from 543 to around 850 seats. Two accompanying bills, the Delimitation Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, were also introduced.

While the Centre says delimitation is necessary to operationalise the quota, Opposition parties allege it is aimed at increasing seats in northern states, benefiting the BJP and reducing southern representation. Several parties have opposed the delimitation provisions while backing women's reservation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured the House that no state would face discrimination, saying, "I give my guarantee… no injustice will be done to any state," and that the proportion of seats for any state would remain unchanged. He also offered a "blank cheque" for others to take credit for the legislation.

However, the ruling NDA lacks the numbers to pass the constitutional amendment without Opposition support. In the Lok Sabha, it has 293 MPs against the Opposition's 233, while 360 votes are required for a two-thirds majority if all members are present and voting. Abstentions could lower the threshold, but support from key parties such as the Samajwadi Party, Trinamool Congress or DMK may be crucial.

In the Rajya Sabha, the NDA has 141 members against the Opposition's 83, with 163 needed for passage. Regional parties and independents could play a decisive role.

If the bill fails in the Lok Sabha, it will not be taken up in the Upper House. —*PTI*

No religion-based quota for Muslims: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday asserted in the Lok Sabha that Muslims will not be given reservation on the basis of religion, calling such a provision unconstitutional.

Intervening in a 40-minute debate on bills to amend the women's quota law and set up a delimitation commission, Shah said the Constitution does not permit religion-based quotas. Responding to Samajwadi Party leaders Akhilesh Yadav and Dharmendra Yadav, he said the demand for reservation for Muslim women "does not even arise". Shah also announced that a caste census will be conducted alongside the ongoing population enumeration, with provisions for caste data collection. He said if the Samajwadi Party chose to give all its election tickets to Muslim women, the government would have "no objection".

SOUTH SEATS TO RISE, NO LOSS OF SHARE: PM

Addressing concerns over delimitation, both Modi and Shah said Lok Sabha seats in five southern states would rise from 129 to 195 when the House expands to 816 seats, countering what he termed a "false narrative".

He detailed that seats would increase to 42 in Karnataka (from 28), 38 in Andhra Pradesh (25), 26 in Telangana (17), 59 in Tamil Nadu (39) and 30 in Kerala (20). He added that their overall share would remain broadly stable at around 24 per cent. —*PTI*

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Karnataka preps for monsoon deficit summer

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

The State government has warned that the summer would likely have more hot days during April-June period than previously, especially in north Karnataka, and that there would a monsoon deficit in most districts in Karnataka.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar held a high-level meeting with District In-charge Ministers, District Officers, and Chief Executive Officers of District Panchayats and instructed them to take precautionary measures to ensure there is no trouble in drinking water during the intense summer. The Central Weather Department has forecast a below-average rainfall that will only be alleviated in August, Siddaramaiah said in the meeting, according to a statement. "Except for five districts, a monsoon deficit is expected in all other districts… (but) If there is trouble with drinking water, the respective district officers will be held responsible."—*PTI*

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Karnataka govt extends DGP Saleem's tenure

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

The State government on Thursday decided to give a 14 month extension to Karnataka DGP M A Saleem. Saleem was supposed to retire in June this year. A notification issued by the Karnataka government granted him an extension till 29 August, 2027. "Dr MA Saleem, IPS, Director General and Inspector General of Police (Head of the Police Force), Karnataka, Bengaluru is continued as Director General and Inspector General of Police (Head of the Police Force), Karnataka, Bengaluru till 29-08-2027 or until further orders, whichever is earlier," the government notification said. Saleem is the 43rd DGP of Karnataka, who assumed charge on 21 May, 2025 replacing Alok Mohan following his retirement. —*PTI*

Iran's jailed Nobel winner critical after heart attack

TEHRAN, 16 APRIL

Iran's imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate is in 'critical' condition after a heart attack. Narges Mohammadi's family and lawyers visited her in Zanjan prison, finding that her health condition was dire. She is weak, pale and has lost weight, said the statement on Wednesday. The report comes after Mohammadi had a heart attack in prison on 24 March. The statement said that following the heart attack, Mohammadi was unconscious without anyone resuscitating her for over an hour. Mohammadi is a rights lawyer who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023 while in prison. She was arrested in December during a visit to the eastern Iranian city of Mashhad and sentenced to seven more years in prison. —*PTI*

The waivers on the purchase of Russian oil had allowed India to secure additional supplies amid global oil disruption —*PTI*

No more Russian oil waiver for India: US

WESHINGTON, 16 APRIL

The US announced Wednesday it will not renew waivers allowing purchases of Iranian and Russian oil without sanctions. These waivers previously enabled India to bypass disruptions near the Strait of Hormuz and secure essential Russian oil supplies.

The waivers on the purchase of Russian oil had allowed India to secure additional supplies amid global oil disruption. Reports suggest that Indian refiners have placed orders for roughly 30 million barrels of Russian oil during the period.

Major refiners, including Reliance, have already reduced purchases from Russian firms such as Rosneft and Lukoil amid US pressure in January this year, but they quickly reversed their strategy and began buying more oil from Russian companies.

The temporary waivers were designed as a short-term measure to stabilise rising energy prices, allowing limited transactions involving oil already loaded onto vessels before specified deadlines to reach global markets and help relieve pressure on energy supplies during the war.

These moves signal an end to US President Donald Trump administration's efforts to use sanctions waivers to increase oil supplies and curb soaring global energy prices.

After Iran had put the major energy route through the Strait of Hormuz— through which around 20 per cent of global crude and liquid petroleum gas (LNG) passes—under its chokehold in March, the US had issued a 30-day licence permitting the delivery and sale of Russian crude loaded before 12 March, with the waiver expiring on 11 April. —*PTI*

Minor girls sexually abused, 100 videos shared: 8 held in M'rashtra

AMRAVATI, 16 APRIL

Eight people were arrested in the circulation of 100 obscene video clips and photographs of minor girls on social media sites, police in Maharashtra's Amravati district said on Thursday.

Police said, even as only eight victims have been formally identified so far.

Police said the main accused, Ayan Ahmed Tanveer, 19 of Paratwada, befriended girls, gained their trust, and allegedly lured them into relationships before recording videos without consent and using them for blackmail.

Some local claims suggest up to 180 victims, though officials have confirmed eight so far, with numbers likely to rise.

The case came to light on April 11 after objectionable clips surfaced online. An FIR was registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, and the Information Technology Act. Ayan was arrested on April 13 and remanded in police custody till 21 April.

Investigations revealed he shared the material with Ujer Iqbal Khan20), who allegedly helped circulate the content widely. Six others, including a flat owner who rented space on an hourly basis, have also been arrested. A Special Investigation Team has been formed to probe the scale of the crime and any wider network. —*PTI*

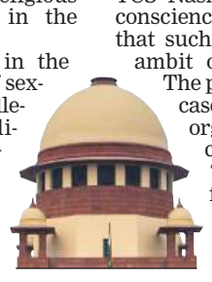
TCS NASHIK CASE

Plea in SC flags religious conversions

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

A plea was filed in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking directions to control religious deceitful conversion in the country.

The plea was filed in the backdrop of charges of sexual harassment and allegations of forced religious conversion levelled by nine female employees at Tata Consultancy Services' (TCS) office in Nashik in Maharashtra. The plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay contended that the case of a conversion racket at TCS Nashik has "shaken the conscience of the nation" and that such acts fall within the ambit of a "terrorist act".



The plea contends that the case is part of a larger, organised and coercive campaign. Such "deceitful and forceful religious conversion" constitutes a serious threat to the country's unity and security. The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, has sought directions to the Centre and state government to take stringent steps to control such conversion.

]The women employees alleged a sustained pattern of workplace abuse dating back to 2022. Their complaints detail incidents of inappropriate touching, lewd remarks, stalking, intrusive questioning and repeated advances by the accused, apart from inaction by senior TCS officials. —*PTI*

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8 including few from K'taka killed in Andhra crash

CHILAKALADONA, 16 APRIL

At least eight devotees, including five women, were killed and 10 others were injured after a Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) collided with a tanker in Mantralayam of Kurnool district on Thursday, police said. BJP leaders stated that some of the victims were from Chikkamagaluru district in Karnataka.

The accident occurred when the devotees were travelling to Mantralayam for the darshan of Sri Raghavendra Swamy, and the vehicle carrying nearly 20 passengers rammed into the tanker.

The accident occurred around 3 am on NH 167 when the driver, reportedly drowsy, drove in the wrong direction, leading to the collision, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said.

The presence of 20 people in the LCV exacerbated the impact of the accident, resulting in increased casualties. A minor girl and two men also died in the accident.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh. —*PTI*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Parents can no longer name kids 'Sheru', 'Chotu' in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, 16 APRIL

Bhiksha (begging) and Bhayankar (scary)... these are some of the suggestions in a draft list of alternatives prepared by Rajasthan's Education Department seeking to replace unusual or derogatory names given to schoolchildren with meaningful monikers.

The Sarthak Naam Abhiyan initiative is aimed at addressing long-standing concerns that names like 'Chotu', 'Sheru' or 'Shaitan' can lead to embarrassment and low self-esteem among students. However, the list of suggestions has thrown up some not so positive names either.

The department's list of nearly 3,000 alternative names includes 1,541 for girls and 1,409 for boys to be shared with parents. Critics have picked on the inclusion of names such as 'Bhiksha', 'Bhayankar', 'Kalyugi' (age of darkness), 'Makkhi' (fly),'Ugra' (causing fear) and 'Thana' (jail).

Academics and parent groups questioned on how and why the inappropriate names found their way in the list. Department officials clarified that the current list is only a draft.

"Several of these names are not in general usage. When parents name their children, there is always some reasoning or context behind it," said senior sociologist and former Rajasthan University professor Rajiv Gupta Social worker Yashvardhan Singh said the issue is also about cultural roots. Parent body Sanyukt Abhibhavak Sangh also criticised the move, calling it a diversion from pressing issues such as rising dropout rates. —*PTI*

SpiceJet flight hits Akasa Air plane at Delhi's Airport

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

An Akasa Air aircraft and a SpiceJet plane suffered damage the Delhi airport on Thursday afternoon. Both Boeing 737 aircraft have been grounded at the airport after the incident. The aviation watchdog DGCA is probing the incident, according to officials.

DGCA said an air traffic controller and SpiceJet pilots have been derostered pending investigation.

Akasa Air's plane was to operate flight QP 1406 from Delhi to Hyderabad, while the SpiceJet aircraft had arrived from Leh after operating the flight SG 124, they added.

The officials said the Akasa Air aircraft was stationary on the taxiway and preparing for takeoff, while the SpiceJet plane was taxiing towards the parking stand when the incident happened at around 2.15PM at Terminal 1 of the airport.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the winglet of SpiceJet's Boeing 737-700 aircraft, VT-SLB, taxiing in the allocated parking bay after operating flight SG 124 (Leh-Delhi) hit the Horizontal Tail Surface (HTS) of Akasa Boeing 737 plane positioned on the apron after push back for operating flight on sector. The airline said all passengers and crew were safely disembarked. —*PTI*

The Akasa Air plane was stationary on the taxiway while SpiceJet plane was taxiing towards the parking stand when the incident happened —*ANI*

KOLAR BEATS HEAT WITH KC VALLEY WATER... FOR NOW

KOLAR, 16 APRIL

Despite being tagged as Drought Prone District, Kolar is beating the heat with the KC Valley project filling its water bodies with treated water from the Koramangala-Challaghatta areas. Temperatures in Kolar district have already touched 35 degrees, and people have largely been safeguarded by the project.

However, environmentalist D Nagaraja Shenoy said that the situation may worsen in the coming years if conservation is not taken seriously and efforts aren't made to revive the water bodies, including traditional kalyanis, and planting more trees.

Notably, the district administration has primitively drawn up comprehensive plan to tackle the summer.

District Commissioner MR Ravi has directed authorities to identify villages that may be impacted early on.

The temperatures are likely to rise by one-two degrees in the next fortnight, Shenoy said.

Manjunath R, a person tracking the weather, added that the temperature could go up to 40 degrees in the coming month, reaching the all-time high that occurred in May 2024.

People have also begun consuming tender coconut water and ice apple to beat the heat.

Dozens of ice apple traders have set up shop on the road sides in Kolar, Bangarpet, KGF and other places. —*Salar News*

State preps for monsoon deficit summer

Chief Minister tells officers to ensure availability of water as sun beats down on K'taka

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

The State government has warned that the summer would likely have more hot days during April-June period than previously, especially in north Karnataka, and that there would a monsoon deficit in most districts in Karnataka.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar held a high-level meeting with District In-charge Ministers, District Officers, and Chief Executive Officers of District Panchayats and instructed them to take precautionary measures to ensure there is no trouble in drinking water during the intense summer.

The Central Weather Department has forecast a below-average rainfall that will only be alleviated in August, Siddaramaiah said in the meeting, according to a statement. "Except for five districts, a monsoon deficit is expected in all other districts... (but) If there is trouble with drinking water, the respective district officers will be held responsible."

Siddaramaiah said that the government has identified 213 taluks and 2,410 gram panchayats that may face drinking water problems during the summer.

"Currently, there is a drinking water problem in 598 gram panchayats across 114 taluks," he stated, adding that drinking water is being supplied to 137 villages through a total of 129 tankers.

He said that there was no shortage of funds to ensure the supply of drinking water. Stating that authorities should rent private borewells in the case of any shortage, he said 585 private borewells have been rented, suppying water to 515 villages. He said tankers should only be used in unavoidable circumstances.

Siddaramaiah said that State's 14 major reservoirs are holding only 34 per cent of their maximum capacity, or 321.93 TMC of water. Last year, during the same period, 330.35 TMC of water was available.

"There is sufficient water available in the reservoirs for present drinking water needs," he said. "Given the likelihood of the monsoon season starting late, the availability of water in reservoirs for drinking purposes must be ensured until mid-July."

He added that electricity connections should be prioritised for drinking water schemes and that fodder for livestock should be safeguarded.

Public grievances related to drinking water should be addressed promptly, with control rooms set up at the taluk and ward levels. District-level task forces should function actively, he added.

FERTILISER WOES

Siddaramaiah added that there was a possibility of fertiliser disruption owing to the war in West Asia. Nearly 40 per cent of India's fertiliser used to pass through the Strait of Hormuz before the closure.

Siddaramaiah instructed officials to take steps against potential hoarding and said that there should be regulations on transportation of fertilisers to other states.

He also came down on officials for high quantities of fertilisers being sold in some districts like Haveri compared to the last year. —*Salar News*

GRAM PANCHAYATS TO BE HIT BY WATER SHORTAGE

DISTRICT	GPS
Kalaburagi	147
Tumakuru	141
Haveri	138
Mandya	130
Belagavi	127
Uttara Kannada	125
Chikkamagaluru	115
Bagalkot	114

Urban local bodies

Currently, shortage in **27** urban local bodies.

Forecast to spread to **95** urban local bodies.

B'LURU SEES 'EXTREME' UV LEVELS

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

Bengaluru is experiencing a spike in ultraviolet (UV) radiation, with the UV Index reaching an "extreme" level of nearly 13. Dermatologists warn that this surge significantly increases the risk of skin damage.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), values above 11 are classified as "extreme," meaning unprotected skin and eyes can be damaged within minutes. A UV Index of 13 indicates extreme exposure risk; such levels can cause visible skin damage in less than 10-15 minutes without protection.

In Bengaluru, the UV index remains at extreme levels throughout the week, peaking between 10am and 12pm. UV exposure is generally safer before 8am and after 5pm. In summer, in cities like Bengaluru that are located closer to the Equator, high UV exposure becomes a serious public health concern. —*Agencies*

How to protect oneself

DOs:

- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with **SPF 30** or higher on exposed skin

- Wear protective clothing.
- Seek shade, especially between 12pm and 4pm
- Use umbrella when outside
- Use extra caution near water and sand. They reflect damaging rays.

DON'Ts:

- Assume expensive sunglasses = better UV protection
- Keep babies under 6 months in direct sunlight

- Skip sunscreen even on cloudy days

Gold smuggling case: SC upholds detention order of Ranya Rao

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

In a major setback to Kannada film actor Harshavardhini Ranya Rao, the Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the preventive detention order passed by the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau (CEIB) against her for allegedly smuggling gold into the country.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh dismissed the appeals filed by Rao's mother and another accused, Sahil Sarkariya Jain's cousin, against the 19 December 2025 order of the Karnataka High Court, which upheld the detention orders of both the detenus.

Detenues, Rao and Sahil Sarkariya Jain, held since April 2025 under the COFEPOSA Act for facilitating the disposal of foreign-marked gold bars, have challenged their detention orders on procedural grounds.

Regarding their claim for legal assistance, the bench stated that a detenu does not have an inherent right to legal counsel during advisory board proceedings. —*PTI*

Long auto queues at LPG stations have become a staple of the City. A scene from Deve Gowda Road, RT Nagar —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Enhanced auto LPG supply in City to over 300%: IndianOil

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

IndianOil on Thursday said it has significantly augmented its Auto LPG supplies to Bengaluru, increasing volumes to over 300 per cent of the usual supply to meet the sharp surge in demand arising from ongoing geopolitical disruptions affecting private sector supply chains.

The oil company said in a statement that it had supplied 75.53 metric tonnes (MT) of Auto LPG in Bengaluru on Wednesday, "substantially higher than the usual daily supply of around 23 MT prior to the crisis".

"This rapid scale-up reflects IndianOil's steadfast commitment to ensuring uninterrupted fuel availability for the city's mobility ecosystem," IndianOil said.

Across Karnataka, IndianOil has also substantially ramped up supplies, increasing its daily dispatches to over 83 MT in recent days, compared to its pre-crisis average of around 43.5 MT per day, effectively doubling supplies to support the state's requirements during the ongoing disruption, it added.

According to IndianOil, the surge in demand has been primarily driven by disruptions in private Auto LPG dispensing stations (ALDS), which traditionally account for nearly 80 per cent of the Auto LPG market in Karnataka, including Bengaluru.

The non-operation or closure of these private outlets has led to a significant shift in customer traffic towards IndianOil Retail Outlets, resulting in long queues at IndianOil ALDS stations, it pointed out.

"IndianOil has responded with a comprehensive operational strategy, with all its ALDS outlets in Bengaluru functioning uninterrupted, ensuring seamless service to our esteemed customers," the company said. —*PTI*

Court reserves order on Cong MLA's murder

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

A special court for MPs and MLAs on Thursday reserved its order on the quantum of sentence for convicted Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni and 16 others in the 2016 murder case of BJP leader Yogesh Goudar.

The court had held the accused guilty of criminal conspiracy and related offences on 15 April.

On Thursday, the court heard arguments from the prosecution and defence on the quantum of punishment.

The court said the accused were also convicted under various sections related to unlawful assembly, rioting and murder. Several of them were additionally held guilty of causing the disappearance of evidence.

Two others, Vasudeva Rama Nilekani and Somashekar Basappa Nyamagoud, were acquitted after being given the benefit of doubt.

The court also directed that perjury proceedings be initiated against multiple witnesses for allegedly giving false testimony.

The case pertains to the killing of Yogesh Goudar, a BJP leader and former Dharwad Zila Panchayat member, who was hacked to death at a gymnasium in Dharwad.

Kulkarni, who was a minister at the time of the incident, was arrested in 2020 and later granted bail.

The CBI took him into custody and he was taken to the Bengaluru Central Jail. —*PTI*

> **If the criminals themselves are legislators and ministers, then what will happen to law and order in Karnataka? No wonder law and order is a complete casualty, and women's safety is at an all-time low**
>
> -Shehzad Poonawalla, BJP National Spokesperson

Smoke engulfs bus carrying convicted MLA

A major accident was averted after a bus carrying murder convict Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni and 16 accomplices developed a technical snag near Parappana Agrahara Central Prison. The incident occurred on Wednesday, when a short circuit combined with a diesel leak led to heavy smoke inside the bus, triggering panic among the occupants. —*PTI*

Prostitution racket busted in Bengaluru, four women rescued

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

The Central Crime Branch (CCB) has dismantled a city-wide prostitution racket, arresting four women and rescuing four others, including two from other states, police announced on Thursday. The operation targeted illegal activities taking place in rented houses across several neighbourhoods, including Manuvana, Vijayanagar, Ramaswamipalya, Banaswadi, Veerabhadreshwara Nagar, Andrahalli and Byadarahalli.

Based on credible intelligence gathered over multiple days, the CCB's Women Protection Squad conducted coordinated raids at these locations. Four women forced into prostitution were rescued, and four women operating the racket were arrested, a senior police official said. —*PTI*

10 held in City for sale of narcotics

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

The City police have announced the arrest of 10 individuals suspected of selling illegal narcotic substances across various parts of the city. Among those apprehended are three foreign nationals, including two women. The police also seized 5kg of MDMA (crystal), 1kg of cocaine, 21kg of ganja, 19 grams of ecstasy pills, and a motorcycle used in the commission of the crime. The drugs are valued at Rs 11.81 crore, with an estimated market worth of Rs 23.63 crore, police said.

Police sources revealed that credible intelligence received over multiple days led to investigations into drug sales within Yelahanka New Town, DJ Halli, Koramangala, Bommanahalli, and Pulakeshinagar police jurisdictions. Based on this information, cases were filed under the NDPS Act at respective police stations, and raids were conducted at identified locations.

City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh looks at seized mobile phones worth Rs 1 crore from another bust in Bengaluru—*MOHAMMED ASAD*

During interrogations, the accused admitted to procuring narcotics from foreign, interstate, and local suppliers at lower prices to sell to the public, including college students. Efforts are ongoing to trace the foreign and interstate suppliers, with investigations still in progress.

All 10 suspects have been produced before the Court , which remanded them to judicial custody. —*PTI*

VISHU CELEBRTATION

Karnataka State Bioenergy Development Board and KPCC VP SE Sudheendra inaugurated Vishu celebrations organised by East Cultural Association in City —*SALAR*

AGAINST NIGHT TRAFFIC IN BANDIPUR

Farmers to protest sterilisation of animals

MYSURU, 16 APRIL

Various farmers' organisations will protest the reopening of night traffic in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve and the State government's proposal to sterilise wild animals and on 17 April.

Karnataka State Sugarcane Growers Association President Hallikerehundi Bhagyaraj said the protest will be take place in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office in Mysuru.

The State Forest Department has proposed sterilisation of wild animals like elephants and leopards to curb the population and thereby mitigate human-animal conflicts, especially in places like Mysuru, Chamarajanagar and Kodagu, which had recently seen a spate of human deaths due to animal conflicts.

—*BANDIPUR NATIONAL PARK*

However, Bhagyaraj said that Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre's plan is unscientific and unnatural.

"Sterilisation of selected species leads to ecological imbalance," he said.

Bhagyaraj also condemned AICC leader Priyank Gandhi Vadra for attempting to persuade the Union Forest Minister to lift the night traffic ban through the Bandipur Tiger Reserve. "Lifting night traffic ban not only disturbs the wildlife in the forest, but also detrimental to the interest of people," he said.

Bhagyaraj also urged the State government to force Bannari Amman Sugar Mills to pay the Rs 100 per tonne incentive announced for sugarcane growers last year. Despite directives from the Chamarajanagar and Mysuru deputy commissioners to release the Rs 18 crore owed, the mill management has reportedly ignored the orders. —*Salar News*

Wild elephant strays near Chikkamagaluru homestay

CHIKKAMAGALURU, 16 APRIL

Panic gripped the residents of a village near Kottigehara in Mudigere taluk after a wild elephant was spotted in the premises of a homestay early on Thursday morning.

The incident occurred in the Udayagiri Homestay, where CCTV footage captured the tusker moving around the property for nearly two minutes. The animal was seen searching for a way across the compound before eventually breaching the fence and entering a nearby coffee plantation.

The elephant reportedly sustained an injury to one of its legs while crossing the compound, leaving behind visible bloodstains along its path. This has heightened fears among locals, who worry that it may turn aggressive.

The homestay, owned by Shivu, also suffered damage to its compound wall and fencing as the elephant forced its way out. Blood trails were found across the estate suggesting that the animal may still be in the vicinity.

Residents have urged the Forest Department to take immediate action. They have called for efforts to safely drive the elephant back into the forest or relocate it.

Forest officials are expected to launch an operation to track and manage the movement of the injured elephant. —*Salar News*

South must accept delimitation: Pai

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

Former Infosys CFO TV Mohandas Pai said on Thursday that the proposed delimitation exercise by the Centre was a "ticking time bomb" that the southern states must accept.

"This has to happen one day," he told PTI, noting that it was Constitutionally mandated. The South will lose more... (But) I don't think it's going to change the political structure more because every state gets 50 per cent seats more. There could be a marginal difference in share."

He said the delimitation is aimed at ensuring one person has one vote.

According to the draft bill, Lok Sabha seats will be increased to a maximum of 850 from the current 543 following a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 Census. —*Agencies*

Stalin burns copy of Delimitation Bill

DMK to move SC against 'black law'; Stalin threatens 1960s-like anti-Hindi protest

CHENNAI/NAMAKKAL, 16 APRIL

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Thursday burnt a copy of the Centre's proposed delimitation bill, calling it a "black law" that would turn Tamils into "refugees" in their own land.

Stalin hoisted a black flag and set the bill on fire in Namakkal, where he is campaigning, hours before a special session of Parliament. Raising slogans such as "Poradavom, Velvom Ondraga" (Let us struggle, win together), he accused the Union government of undermining the state's political representation.

Following his lead, DMK leaders, office-bearers and elected representatives staged similar protests across Tamil Nadu. Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin burnt a copy of the bill in Madurai, alleging delimitation was a "weapon" to reduce the representation of southern states. He also accused the Centre of "continuously betraying" Tamil Nadu with the backing of northern states.

DMK says it will move Supreme Court against delimitation bill, if passed in Parliament

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin burns a copy of the proposed Delimitation bill during a protest in Namakkal, Tamil Nadu —*PTI*

At the DMK headquarters, Anna Arivalayam in Chennai, party leaders RS Bharathi and TKS Elangovan led cadres dressed in black in burning copies of the bill. Black flags were also hoisted at the residences of ministers, party offices and public spaces across the state, including the Gopalapuram home of late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi.

Allies joined the protest. Tamil Nadu Congress Committee chief K Selvaperunthagai held a demonstration in Salem, while Dravidar Kazhagam leader K Veeramani and Left parties CPI and CPI(M) also raised black flags.

In a statement, Stalin invoked the anti-Hindi agitations of the 1960s, saying the "fire of resistance" had been reignited and would spread across Tamil Nadu to challenge what he termed the BJP's "arrogance". —*PTI*

Constitution Amendment Bill will kill democracy: Cong

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Thursday that the government began finishing off democracy by putting pressure on the Election Commission (EC) and the judiciary, but now, an "open attack" has been launched on democracy with the Constitution Amendment Bill.

Participating in a debate in the Lok Sabha on the three bills introduced for amendments in the women's-quota law and setting up a delimitation commission, Priyanka asked why can't the government give 33 per cent reservation to women on the current 543 LS seats.

She said the bill talks of increasing the number of Lok Sabha seats to 850 by a delimitation commission on the basis of the 2011 Census data.

She also described the background to the issue of women's reservation.

"The PM said this issue was blocked for 30 years. This was started by a person called Nehru. Not the Nehru they avoid but Motilal Nehru, who as the president of a committee prepared a list of 19 rights which were then passed as a resolution at the Karachi session of the Congress and formed the basis of giving women equal rights in Indian politics," she said.

The Congress said that the government wants to "bulldoze" delimitation in the name of women's reservation, and asserted that if it is really committed to implementing women's quota law it should do so immediately. It also alleged that the BJP was using delimitation as a "political weapon."

Initiating the discussion, Gogoi said the bills are "anti-women, anti-caste census, anti-Constitution and anti-federal." — *PTI*

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Special session of Parliament in New Delhi on Thursday —*PTI*

> **Why are Opposition parties and some regional parties of the South, led by the DMK, making so much noise? The tears they are shedding are crocodile tears**
>
> -Tejasvi Surya, BJP MP

Opposition to boycott RS deputy chairman election

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The Opposition will boycott the 17 April election for Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman, protesting the Centre's failure to appoint a Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker for seven years, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said. He also objected to Harivansh's nomination, after his term ended on 9 April, and lack of consultation. While the NDA backs his re-election, Congress, TMC and Left parties have opposed the move despite outreach by Leader of the House JP Nadda. —*PTI*

—WIKIPEDIA

Centre approves foreign funding for Bageshwar Samiti

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The Ministry of Home Affairs granted registration to Shri Bageshwar Jan Seva Samiti under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), allowing it to receive foreign funds. Led by 29-year-old preacher Dhirendra Krishna Shastri, the organisation is described as religious, cultural, economic, educational, and social. The Bageshwar Dham website lists the samiti as the account holder for contributions. It is among 38 organisations, including Ramakrishna Math Bolpur, Sri Ramakrishna Sharada Ashrama, and NIIT Foundation, approved this year to receive foreign funds. FCRA registration, valid for five years, is essential for receiving foreign contributions and requires a programme aligned with cultural, religious, or social activities. Currently, about 16,000 associations are registered under the FCRA, receiving around Rs 22,000 crore annually, as per recent legislation. —*PTI*

War cannot resolve problems: PM on Iran, Ukraine

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday emphasised that military conflict cannot resolve problems in West Asia and Ukraine. He made these remarks after discussions with Austria's Federal Chancellor Christian Stocker in New Delhi. "Today, the entire world is passing through a very serious and tense situation," PM Modi stated, noting that the global impact of this tense environment is felt by everyone. The Prime Minister affirmed that India and Austria agree on the importance of peace, Modi also highlighted that the Austrian Chancellor's visit would energise trade and investment. Following the historic India-EU Free Trade Agreement, he added, "a new golden chapter has begun in relations between India and EU."—*PTI*

Sikkim orders workers to attend PM's event

GANGTOK, 16 APRIL

The Sikkim government on Thursday directed employees to participate in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programmes marking the closing of 50 years of statehood later this month. The circular from the Department of Personnel encouraged officers and employees to wear traditional attire on 27 and 28 April. "All officers and employees of the state government, including officers posted in the districts, are required to extend their participation in welcoming the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 27 April at Gangtok," it stated. They must also attend the closing ceremony at Paljor Stadium on 28 April . Heads of Departments have been instructed to issue detailed schedules. Modi had earlier marked the beginning of the celebrations, virtually addressing the event from Bagdogra. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S QUOTA LAW, DELIMITATION CONSPIRACY FOR NRC: MAMATA

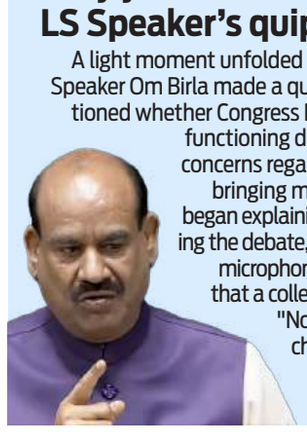
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday alleged that linking amendments to the women's reservation law with the proposed delimitation exercise was a "conspiracy" to delete voters' names and implement the NRC.

She claimed the move aimed to "divide India". She questioned delays in implementing the women's quota law and highlighted that 37 per cent of TMC's Lok Sabha MPs are women.

Banerjee also accused the BJP of violating the Model Code of Conduct, alleging Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman distributed "Matrishakti Bhorsa Card" forms promising financial aid to women. She further alleged that people from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam were staying in hotels with cash to influence voters. Banerjee added that leaders including Uddhav Thackeray, MK Stalin, Tejashwi Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav were keen to campaign in Bengal in her support. —*PTI*

Only your mic doesn't work': LS Speaker's quip at Rahul Gandhi

A light moment unfolded in the Lok Sabha on Thursday when Speaker Om Birla made a quip while Opposition members questioned whether Congress MP KC Venugopal's microphone was functioning during a discussion. Venugopal raised concerns regarding the government's approach to bringing multiple Bills together. As the Speaker began explaining the procedural framework governing the debate, the Opposition said that Venugopal's microphone was muted. When Gandhi gestured that a colleague's mic was not working by saying "No mic," Birla responded, "Chalu hai mic chalu hai, aapka hi band hota hai" (The mic is on, only yours doesn't work).

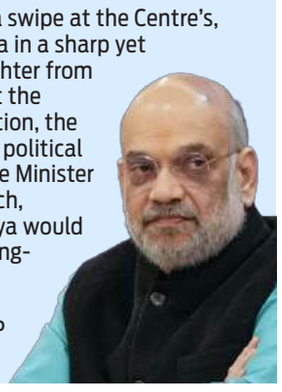


—AGENCIES

Priyanka's 'Chanakya' jibe at Amit Shah draws laughter

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi took a swipe at the Centre's, invoking ancient strategist Chanakya in a sharp yet light-hearted remark that drew laughter from treasury benches. While stating that the Congress supports women's reservation, the Wayanad MP alleged the bill carried political motives. As BJP MPs, including Home Minister Amit Shah, laughed during her speech, Priyanka quipped that even Chanakya would have been "shocked" by their "cunningness".

Her remark triggered loud laughter from Shah, Kiren Rijiju and other BJP members. —AGENCIES



Vijay promises women gold, sarees & Rs 2,000

CHENNAI, 16 APRIL

Actor-turned-politician and TVK chief Vijay on Thursday unveiled an expansive manifesto for the 23 April Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, with a strong focus on welfare, especially for women.

He promised Rs 2,500 monthly assistance for women below 60 years, 8 grams of gold and a silk saree for indigent brides, and interest-free loans up to Rs 5 lakh for women-led self-help groups.

In education, the party pledged Rs 15,000 annually to mothers or guardians of children in government and aided schools to curb dropouts, 100 residential schools named after K Kamaraj, and higher education loans up to Rs 20 lakh. Vijay also proposed an AI Ministry, AI University and AI City.

For farmers, the manifesto promised full waiver of cooperative crop loans for those owning under five acres and 50 per cent waiver for others, along with MSP of Rs 3,500 per quintal for paddy and Rs 4,500 per tonne for sugarcane.

Addressing unemployment, Vijay pledged five lakh government jobs, five lakh internships and up to Rs 4,000 monthly aid for unemployed graduates. He also assured consideration of the Old Pension Scheme and regularisation of contract workers. Healthcare promises include modernised hospitals, free annual check-ups and Rs 25 lakh family insurance.

The manifesto also offers Rs 3,000 pensions, 200 units of free power, patta regularisation and universal piped water supply. —*PTI*

TVK Chief Vijay during release of party's manifesto in Chennai —*PTI*

FLAGS TRUST DEFICIT

SC bins WB plea against officers' transfer

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Flagging the lack of trust between the West Bengal government and the Election Commission, the Supreme Court dismissed a plea on Thursday challenging the transfer of around 1,000 administrative and police officers by the poll panel.

The court, however, kept open for adjudication in future the contentious legal question about whether the Election Commission (EC) needed to consult the concerned state before effecting administrative changes.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi observed that it was the "misfortune" of the country that the purpose of creating All India Services was getting frustrated.

The CJI said the SC had to appoint judicial officers for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal as there was trust deficit between the parties. The court passed the order while hearing a plea challenging a Calcutta High Court order dated 31 March. The HC had dismissed a PIL challenging the transfer of officers by the ECI in West Bengal. Elections to the 294-member West Bengal Assembly will be held in two phases, on 23 and 29 April. Votes will be counted on 4 May. During the hearing, senior advocate Kalyan Banerjee, appearing for petitioner Arka Kumar Nag, said that for the first time, the chief secretary was transferred.

He said around 1,100 officers in West Bengal were transferred "overnight" after the election notification was issued. "This is not something that has happened for the first time or that has happened in this state only," the bench observed. —*PTI*

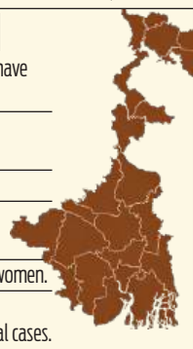
LEADERS WITH CRIMINALS CASES IN WEST BENGAL

Nearly 23% of the candidates in the first phase of West Bengal elections faces criminal cases, according to Association for Democratic Reforms. Here is a breakdown of numbers

Total candidates analysed	Seats	Polling date
1,475 of 1,478	152	23 April

CRIMINAL CASES

- 345 candidates (23%) have criminal cases.
- 294 candidates face serious charges.
- 19 face murder cases.
- 105 booked for attempt to murder.
- 98 face crimes against women.
- Over 66 seats have 3+ candidates with criminal cases.



PARTY-WISE CANDIDATES WITH CRIMINAL CASES

BJP: 106 / 152 (70%).

TMC: 63 / 148 (43%).

CPI(M): 43 / 98 (44%).

Congress: 39 / 151 (26%).

WEALTH PROFILE

- 309 candidates (21%) are crorepatis.

LOW WOMEN REPRESENTATION

- Just 167 women given tickets.

HIGH COMMAND TO DECIDE

Don't discuss CM face: Kerala Cong to leaders

T'PURAM, 16 APRIL

KPCC chief Sunny Joseph said on Thursday that party leaders and workers should exercise restraint on the issue of who should be the party's CM candidate, as the high command will decide it after the poll results come on 4 May.

Similar views were expressed by senior Congress leaders Ramesh Chennithala, Benny Behanan and K Muraleedharan who said that it was inappropriate for party leaders to comment on social media supporting anyone as Chief Ministerial candidate.

KPCC chief Joseph told a TV channel that senior party leaders should set the example by showing restraint and not openly announcing their views on who should be the chief minister if the UDF wins.

KPCC Chief Sunny Joseph said that senior party leaders should not openly announcing their views on who should be CM —*X/ADVSUNNYJOSEPH*

"I am not against anyone expressing views on the issue, but they should do it among themselves and not openly," he said in response to some party leaders, including former KPCC president K Sudhakaran, making statements favouring Congress general secretary KC Venugopal as CM. He said that such public expression of their views would create discontent among the people who expect unity in the Congress.Senior leaders including Muraleedharan had directed Congress members to refrain from discussions on the Chief Ministerial candidate until the results are declared. — *PTI*

HARYANA CONG SUSPENDS 5 MLAs FOR CROSS-VOTING IN RS POLLS

CHANDIGARH, 16 APRIL

The Opposition Congress in Haryana suspended five of its MLAs on Thursday from the party's primary membership for allegedly cross-voting during the Rajya Sabha elections last month. The party named Naraingarh MLA Shalli Chaudhary, Sadhaura MLA Renu Bala, Punhana MLA Mohammad Illyas, Hathin MLA Mohammad Israil and Ratia legislator Jarnail Singh for defying the official line.

State party chief Rao Narender Singh said the action followed the committee's recommendation and approval from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. According to a party statement, Singh said the five MLAs showed serious indiscipline by voting against the party's official candidate during the recently held Rajya Sabha elections, which is against the organisational norms.

Singh also stated that this decision sends a clear message to all leaders and workers that any activity contrary to the party's collective decisions and authorised stance will be met with strict action. Of the five MLAs, Shalli Chaudhary, Renu Bala and Jarnail Singh denied the allegations, saying their names were being unnecessarily dragged into the controversy and maintained that they had voted for the party candidate. —*PTI*

—FREEPIK

Newborn girl found dead in garbage pile

THANE, 16 APRIL

A newborn girl was found dead in a pile of garbage in Bhiwandi town of Maharashtra's Thane, police said on Thursday. The body of the infant was found 14 April's morning by a power-loom worker, who immediately alerted the authorities. A case was registered against unidentified persons under section 94 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which pertains to the intentional concealment of a child's birth by secretly disposing of the body. The police are currently scanning records of recent births at nearby hospitals and checking the CCTV footage in the vicinity to identify those responsible, the official added. —*PTI*

—PIXABAY

Dismissed UP cop burns beggar to fake his own death

HATHRAS, 16 APRIL

A dismissed Uttar Pradesh Police constable has been arrested for allegedly killing a beggar and burning the body to fake his own death, police said on Thursday. The incident occurred on March 12 in Hathras, where a charred body of an unidentified elderly man was found. The accused, Ramveer Singh, 55, had been dismissed earlier over criminal activities. Police said Singh placed his identity card and personal belongings near the body to mislead investigators. His motive for staging the fake death remains unclear. Described as a habitual offender, Ramveer Singh has multiple cases across several districts, including kidnapping, murder, robbery and fraud. The victim's identity is yet to be confirmed. —*PTI*

Unhappy over marks, Class 10 student ends life

GURUGRAM, 16 APRIL

A Class 10 student allegedly died by suicide at his residence here after the CBSE Class 10 results were declared, officials said on Thursday. Police suspect that the deceased, Kunal, 16, might have taken the extreme step because he was upset about not meeting his expectations. Family members said he had performed well in the exams but was upset as his results did not meet his expectations. Kunal was a student of a private school, and his father, an employee in the Railways, had booked a laptop for him after the results were announced. —*PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Man dies after cracker explodes in hand during Vishu

PALAKKAD, 16 APRIL

A 34-year-old man died after a cracker exploded in his hand while celebrating Vishu at Sreekrishnapuram here, police said on Thursday. The deceased is Dileep, a native of Sreekrishnapuram. According to police, as part of Vishu celebrations, Dileep and his friends were bursting crackers at a club in Sreekrishnapuram at around 8.30 pm on Wednesday. Police said Dileep lit a cracker while holding others in his other hand. A spark from the bursting cracker ignited the crackers he was holding, causing him severe injuries, officials said. Dileep was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he died at around 10.30 pm. Police said hospital authorities suspect that he died due to cardiac arrest. —*PTI*

Can't punish people for not voting: SC

SC bins PIL seeking directions to make voting compulsory, says approach govt

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The Supreme Court refused to entertain a PIL seeking directions to make voting compulsory, saying such a mandate falls within the "policy domain" and cannot be done by the judiciary.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi asked PIL petitioner Ajay Goel on Thursday to approach the stakeholders with the grievances.

It said the pleas, seeking penal consequences for wilful non-voters and making voting compulsory, cannot be dealt with by the court. The petitioner also sought issuance of guidelines to restrict government benefits for those who wilfully abstain from voting.

During the proceedings, the CJI said democracy thrives on public awareness rather than coercion.

Responding to the petitioner's suggestion that the court

The SC said it cannot impose penalties on non-voters —*PTI*

should direct the Election Commission to impose restrictions on government amenities for non-voters, the CJI questioned the logic of criminalising the act of staying home.

"Should we direct their arrest? If a citizen doesn't go for voting, what can we do," the CJI asked.

The bench referred to the practical difficulties of a mandatory voting law and said on election days, many citizens, including judges, are required to work.

"If we accept this, then my brother Justice Bagchi would have to go to West Bengal to vote even though it is a working day," the CJI said. "Judicial work is also important," Justice Bagchi said.

The bench also expressed concern for the marginalised sections of society. "If a poor person says, 'I need to earn my wages, how do I vote?' what should we say to them?" the bench asked.

The petitioner said the Election Commission should be directed to set up a committee to propose restrictions on those who fail to exercise their franchise. "These issues lie in the policy domain," the Chief Justice said. — *PTI*

Plea on Ashoka Chakra binned

The Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea seeking a direction to the Centre and others to frame guidelines for displaying the Ashoka Chakra on the national flag.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi told the petitioner on Thursday, who appeared in person, to do something constructive.

"There is no need to be so emotional about these things. You have informed the authorities. Now it is for the authorities to decide," the CJI told the petitioner.

The petitioner showed a picture of the Ashoka Chakra installed at a roundabout in Varanasi, but the bench refused his plea. — PTI

SC allows withdrawal of 17 PILs

A lawyer, who was reprimanded last month for filing "frivolous" PILs, sought the SC's nod to withdraw 17 of the 47 PILs he had filed. Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Panchol

permitted advocate Sachin Gupta to withdraw his PILs.

Appearing in person, Gupta said he was withdrawing the PILs as soon as the 17 pleas came up for hearing before the bench. — PTI

PIL against tetra pack liquor rejected

The SC rejected a PIL seeking a ban on the sale of liquor in tetra packs in UP and asked the petitioner to approach the authorities.UP recently approved the introduction of an e-lottery system for allocation of liquor and 'bhang' (cannabis) shops. It also said that country liquor will be mandatorily packed in tetra packs to prevent adulteration.

PIL Meenakshi Tiwari said that tetra pack liquor should be banned as it was reaching educational institutions. —*PTI*

Telangana: 135 castes below avg index

HYDERABAD, 16 APRIL

An expert group which analysed the caste survey conducted by the Congress government in Telangana in 2024-25 observed that 135 of the 242 castes in the state are more backward than the average Comprehensive Backwar dness Index.

The Independent Expert Working Group (IEWG), headed by former SC judge Justice B Sudershan Reddy, also said the SCs and STs are "three times more backward" than General Castes. Although the survey was conducted in 2024-25, the state government released the Telangana Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste (SEEEPC) survey-2024 only on Wednesday.

The IEWG headed by former SC judge B Sudershan Reddy, said the SCs and STs are 'three times more backward' than general castes —*PTI*

In March 2025, the state government constituted the nine-member IEWG to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the SEEEPC Survey 2024. The IEWG was mandated to verify, analyse, interpret and present the findings of SEEEPC 2024.

The group, in its key findings, also said Backward Classes are 2.7 times more backward than the General Caste.

The weighted average Comprehensive Backward ness Index (CBI) score for the entire state works out to 81, it said.

"Recall, higher the CBI score, the more backward the caste. 135 out of the total 242 castes have a CBI score higher than 81. These 135 castes account for 67 per cent of the population," the group said.

Of the 135 castes, 69 are classified as Backward Classes, 41 are Scheduled Castes and 25 are Scheduled Tribes.

The main conceptual finding of the report is that "every backward caste is not equally backward." — *PTI*

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

TCS suspects teamed up against women staff: Cops

Police Commissioner Karnik said the HR head of the TCS unit had discouraged a victim from complaining —*SCREENGRAB*

NASHIK, 16 APRIL

The investigation into the alleged forced religious conversion and sexual harassment at the Nashik branch of TCS suggests that the seven male suspects operated like an organised gang against female employees, a senior officer said.

Police registered nine cases in connection with the allegations. While seven men and a woman have been arrested, one female suspect is on the run.

Explaining the role of the two female suspects, Police Commissioner Sandeep Karnik said on Wednesday that the operations and HR head of the unit had allegedly discouraged a victim from submitting a complaint, saying "these things happen" and sided with the suspects.

A Nashik court on Wednesday remanded the female operations manager to judicial custody till 28 April.

Responding to reports speculating about the involvement of an extremist organisation or funding from abroad for the accused, the police commissioner said a thorough investigation is underway, and the police have written to the SID, ATS and NIA.

He said nine cases registered by the police include a complaint lodged by a male employee of the firm, alleging an attempt at forced religious conversion and religious harassment at the workplace.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra BJP minister Nitesh Rane said on Thursday said there is "corporate jihad" in the state, and that giving preference to Hindu candidates is the "need of the hour" to prevent "jihadi activities."

Referring to the TCS case in Nashik, Rane alleged that jobs were being used as a tool for religious conversion. — *PTI*

Pakistan-based X users incited violence in Noida, say police chief

NOIDA, 16 APRIL

Social media accounts allegedly operated from Pakistan were used to spread misleading information and trigger workers' unrest in Noida, Police Commissioner Laxmi Singh said on Thursday.

A total of 62 people have been arrested so far in connection with the widespread workers' stir for wage hike in Noida.

Laxmi Singh said a technical analysis of two X handles, '@Proudindiannavi and @Mir_Ilyas_INC, revealed that they were being operated from Pakistan with the use of VPNs.

"Investigation into the matter is going on," she told reporters.

Police said on 13 April misleading posts were circulated through these accounts with the intent to disturb peace and create law and order problems. The content led to fear and outrage among residents in different parts of the district.

- SP Laxmi Singh said a technical analysis of two X handles, '@Proudindiannavi and @Mir_Ilyas_INC, revealed that they were being operated from Pakistan with the use of VPNs

A mob resorted to stone-pelting, injuring several people, and carried out arson and vandalism against vehicles, private property and public assets, she said.

An FIR was registered at Sector 20 Police Station on 13 April under the BNS and the Information Technology Act against the two social media handles, and a probe was initiated.

The police commissioner said violence was reported from two locations, with a majority of those involved identified as outsiders.

"Strict action is being taken against such elements, and proceedings will also be initiated under the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act," she added.

The 62 arrested include those allegedly involved in rioting and arson. Thirteen cases have been registered in connection with the incidents.

The police commissioner said the situation in the district has returned to normal after Wednesday.

A flag march was conducted in the morning and patrolling is underway under a sector-based security arrangement. — *PTI*

Sailor stranded in Iran, parents seek govt help

ALAPPUZHA, 16 APRIL

The parents of Jerin George, a native of Haripad in Keralam's Alappuzha district, have appealed for government help to bring their son home from an Iranian ship where he has been stranded since the outbreak of the West Asia conflict. George, who left home eight months ago and was due to return by 3 March, unable to leave after the ship returned to Iran. His mother said food was scarce and contact limited to phone calls.

Meanwhile, in Goa, authorities have intensified action against LPG black marketing. Civil supplies secretary Gadkar said 363 raids were conducted between 1 March and 15 April, leading to the seizure of 44 domestic and commercial cylinders. — *PTI*

PUNJAB POLICE BUST ISI-BACKED TERROR MODULE, ONE HELD

CHANDIGARH, 16 APRIL

Punjab Police announced the busting of an ISI-backed terror module, arresting one suspect with four grenades. In a joint operation by Amritsar and Mohali's State Special Operations and Punjab Police's Counter Intelligence Wing, officers recovered two foreign-made pistols and ammunition.

The perpetrator was allegedly acting under instructions from foreign handlers and linked to a recent grenade attack in Chandigarh, police said. An FIR was registered at the Special Operations Police Station in Amritsar.

Police said further investigations are ongoing to identify and apprehend other members involved. The operation aims to dismantle the network responsible for recent terror activities in the region. —*PTI*

Hundreds homeless in Lucknow slum fire

LUCKNOW, 16 APRIL

Hundreds of residents returned on Thursday to the charred remains of their homes in a Vikas Nagar slum cluster, sifting through debris in search of belongings, only to find almost everything destroyed after a massive fire.

Two children, both around two years old, were killed in the blaze that broke out on Wednesday evening. Their bodies were recovered hours later, said DCP (East) Sharma.

Around 200 shanties were gutted, leaving hundreds, mostly domestic workers and daily wage earners, homeless. Residents recounted devastating losses. A domestic worker said she had built her household "piece by piece" over years. Another woman lost savings and jewellery collected while raising five children alone. The fire, which began in a vacant plot near Ring Road, spread rapidly due to strong winds and flammable materials. —*PTI*

Security personnel at the site after a fire broke out at a slum cluster, destroying about 200 shanties, in the Vikas Nagar area of Lucknow —*PTI*

DEADLY ROMEO

Delhi man who duped 500 women arrested

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

He was a doctor, lawyer, film producer, model, and businessman. Behind all these online personas was a 35-year-old man who allegedly duped over 500 women of around Rs 2 crore by using fake social media or dating app profiles.

The suspect, Anand Kumar, was arrested by the southwest cyber police for allegedly running an organised network of romance scams, honey-trapping and online blackmail targeting women through dating and matrimonial platforms, DCP (Southwest) Amit Goel said in a statement.

Kumar used fake identities on social media as well as on matrimonial sites, to approach women.

He used to initiate conversations and gradually build connections with the victims. After gaining trust, he would shift communication to private messaging platforms, using multiple mobile numbers to avoid detection.

The officer said once he gained the victim's confidence, Kumar would introduce narratives, like medical emergencies to solicit money."In one case, a woman was cheated of around Rs 7 lakh after being contacted by a fake profile," the officer said.

Police said Kumar subsequently fabricated stories of financial distress and sought help from the victim. When she began demanding her money back, he stopped responding and later falsely claimed that the person she knew had died. —*PTI*

The Cyber Police of Delhi's South-West district arrested Anand Kumar from Bengal —*ANI*

WOMAN DIES AS DOCS MIX-UP NAME, OPERATE ON THIGH INSTEAD OF SPINE

VARANASI, 16 APRIL

A 71-year-old woman died allegedly after being subjected to a wrong surgical procedure at the trauma centre of the Banaras Hindu University. Her family said a thigh surgery was performed on her instead of the required spinal tumour operation, officials said. The error happened due to a mix up of first names, Radhika, of the deceased and another woman who came in with leg fracture.

The deceased woman, identified as Radhika Devi from Amritpur, had been admitted to the hospital on 25 February with complaints of a spinal cord tumour, her grandson Mrityunjay Pal said.

He said she was undergoing treatment under the supervision of a doctor. On 7 March, she was taken for surgery, but instead of operating on the spine, doctors performed a procedure on her thigh. "When no fracture was found, the wound was stitched and she was brought out of ICU," Pal claimed, adding that the error led to complications.

- The dead Radhika Devi from Amritpur, had been admitted to the hospital on 25 February with complaints of a spinal cord tumour, her grandson Mrityunjay Pal said later

He said the woman's condition deteriorated, following which she underwent another surgery on 18 March. She died on 27 March. — *PTI*

Concern mounts as AI enters Indian courts

WHEN AI ENTERS THE COURTROOM
Fake Citations. Real Consequences.
HIGH COURT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
ORDER
FABRICATED BY AI
55 MILLION PENDING CASES IN INDIA
UNDERTRIAL
DELAYED JUSTICE
HUMAN COST
" A ruling built on fabricated AI citations is not an error in the decision-making process. It is misconduct. "
SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
ChatGPT
List relevant bail precedents where assault involved cruelty
AI CAN ASSIST. BUT JUDGMENT MUST REMAIN HUMAN
THE RISKS
Invented Citations
Reinforces Bias
Threatens Liberty
CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

The case seemed straightforward enough: a land dispute in Andhra Pradesh, a commissioner appointed to survey the property, and a set of objections to be ruled on.

The judge resolved it by citing four legal precedents. There was just one problem. None of those precedents existed.

All four had been generated by an AI tool — plausible-sounding judgments, complete with case names and legal reasoning, conjured from thin air. The error surfaced only on appeal, climbing all the way to Supreme Court, the country's highest judicial authority.

The top court did not treat it as an honest mistake. In late February, a bench declared that a ruling built on fabricated AI citations was not simply "an error in the decision-making process." It was, the bench said, "misconduct." Notices went out to attorney general, solicitor general, and the Bar Council of India — the statutory body that licenses the country's roughly 1.8 million lawyers.

"It is not a question of whether we should integrate AI or not but it is the question of how far the due diligence should be," said Sindoora VNL, a lawyer who represents the defendants. "The court indicated this might be a question of misconduct. Now we have to see how far they are willing to take it."

CHATGPT IN THE COURTROOM

India is not the only country asking that question. Across the world, in courtrooms that range from the sophisticated to the severely underfunded, artificial intelligence is quietly being woven into the machinery of justice, often faster than anyone has figured out how to govern it.

For instance, in 2023, a judge in Colombia included a transcript of a conversation with ChatGPT in a ruling involving an autistic child's medical treatment, saying the tool had helped "assist, not replace" his reasoning. Months later, two lawyers in New York City were sanctioned after submitting a legal brief that cited six cases invented by the chatbot — precedents that had never existed.

India's most striking courtroom AI moment came not from a scandal, but from a judge who chose to be unusually candid.

In March 2023, a judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court stopped a bail hearing to type a question into ChatGPT. The man before him had been charged with murder. The judge wanted broader context on bail jurisprudence when assault involved cruelty.

The judge denied bail. But he was transparent enough to say, in his written order, that he had consulted the chatbot.

The transparency itself became the story. Legal advocates warned that ChatGPT was prone to inventing facts and encoding biases from its training data.

"AI cannot replace human conscience in justice delivery," said Mimansa Ambastha, founder of Starlex Consultants and a strategic counsel on AI and cybersecurity in India. "The danger is that the balance between assistance and deference can slip. And when it slips in a bail hearing, a person's liberty is at stake."

Bail in India is not a procedural formality. Hundreds of thousands of people are held as undertrial prisoners, accused who have not been convicted but spend years behind bars while their cases inch forward.

To understand the desperation that drives these AI misadventures in India, a single number helps: 55 million. That is roughly how many cases are currently pending across India's judiciary from the Supreme Court in New Delhi down to district courts in small towns where a judge may be managing hundreds of active files simultaneously.

More than 1,80,000 cases have been unresolved despite being in trial for over 30 years.

The consequences of such delays can stretch across generations. Last year, for instance, the High Court in Uttar Pradesh acquitted three men who had spent 38 years in prison for a 1982 murder. By the time the verdict came, nearly four decades had passed since their arrest.

A 2018 government paper estimated it would take 324 years to clear the backlog at then-current rates.

It is into this crisis that AI has walked, offering the seductive promise of speed.

Ambastha said the crisis creates exactly the wrong conditions for unchecked AI adoption. "But the judiciary must always choose surety over speed," she told DW.

Even the country's top judges acknowledge the complications. During recent hearings, India's Chief Justice Surya Kant observed from the bench that AI is paradoxically adding work because court staff must now verify whether AI-generated legal citations actually exist before proceedings can continue.

WHEN ALGORITHMS REFLECT OLD BIASES

The deeper concern is not only that AI can invent facts; it can also inherit the biases embedded in the legal data used to train it.

Legal datasets are built from decades of judgments, police records and legal filings. Those records reflect the inequalities of the societies that produced them. When algorithms learn from them, experts say, they can quietly reproduce those patterns in new decisions.

"AI systems do not create bias out of thin air. They replicate what they are trained on," said Ambastha. "If historical data contains discrimination, the model will absorb it and present the output as if it were objective."

That risk is particularly troubling in criminal cases, where algorithmic assessments could influence decisions about bail, sentencing or recidivism. In India's overcrowded prisons, where the majority of inmates are undertrial prisoners awaiting judgment, even small shifts in how risk is interpreted could affect thousands of lives.

The country's prison data already reflects deep social disparities. According to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau, people from marginalised communities — including Dalits, tribal groups and Muslims — make up a disproportionately large share of inmates compared with their share of the population. Muslims constitute about 14.2 per cent of India's population but account for roughly 18.7 per cent of undertrial prisoners. Dalits, who make up about 16.6 per cent of the population, account for about 21 per cent of undertrials in Indian jails.

For experts studying AI in law, those patterns illustrate the danger. If predictive systems are trained on historical policing or incarceration data, they may treat those disparities as indicators of risk rather than evidence of structural inequality.

Research on large language models used in India has already found that such systems can reproduce stereotypes related to caste and religion present in their training data.

"If we are not careful, algorithms can end up reinforcing the same social hierarchies that the justice system is supposed to correct," Ambastha said.

Matheus Puppe, a Brazilian lawyer and researcher who studies the intersection of artificial intelligence and law, says the danger lies in how easily algorithmic outputs can appear authoritative. Judges and lawyers may treat machine-generated analysis as neutral simply because it is computational.

"The concern is that AI may reproduce structural distortions embedded in legal systems," Puppe told DW. "Once those patterns are translated into algorithms, they gain a veneer of scientific legitimacy."

The warning carries particular weight in countries like Brazil, which has moved aggressively to integrate AI tools into its courts to manage large caseloads. Puppe said that while such systems can help sort documents or flag relevant precedents, they also risk encoding the inequalities already present in judicial data. The concern is not hypothetical. Studies of algorithmic risk-assessment tools used in the United States have found that some systems were more likely to label Black defendants as high risk than white defendants accused of similar crimes. Legal scholars say similar patterns could emerge anywhere AI models rely on historical criminal justice data. For that reason, experts say AI must remain a strictly assistive tool inside courtrooms. "Technology can help organize information or identify precedents," Ambastha said. "But the moral judgment of the law cannot be delegated to a machine." *—DW News*

SALAR ساہر

Asha's demise puts Bareilly's 'jhumka' back in spotlight

Asha Bhosle's song 'Jhumka Gira Re, Bareilly Ke Bazaar Mein', featured in the 1966 film 'Mera Saaya' and was picturised on actoress Sadhana *—PTI*

The jhumka trade in Bareilly owes much of its popularity to the iconic song *—PTI*

The death of legendary singer Asha Bhosle earlier this week has brought Bareilly's iconic "jhumka" back into the spotlight especially among youth, as demand for the traditional earrings picked up ahead of the Akshaya Tritiya festival on 19 April.

Asha Bhosle, who gave voice to over 12,000 songs in multiple languages in a singing career spanning over seven decades, died in a Mumbai hospital on 12 April. She was 92.

According to Bareilly jewellers, women have begun purchasing jhumkas for the auspicious occasion, while traders dealing in artificial jewellery have sought fresh supplies from wholesalers in Delhi to meet the rising demand.

The renewed interest follows the enduring popularity of Bhosle's song 'Jhumka Gira Re, Bareilly Ke Bazaar Mein', which continues to evoke curiosity among younger generations, many of whom are now discovering the song online and humming it.

The song, featured in the 1966 film 'Mera Saaya' and composed by Madan Mohan, was picturised on actor Sadhana and gave Bareilly a distinct cultural identity, helping popularise its jewellery markets in India and abroad.

Deputy Director (Tourism) Ravindra Kumar said the song remains one of the strongest cultural symbols of Bareilly even today.

"It has given the city a unique identity, and Bareilly is widely known as the 'Jhumka City' because of it," he said.

He added that tourists, pilgrims and visitors from across the country and abroad often ask about the "jhumka" and its story.

"People are curious to know where the jhumka fell and the history behind it," Kumar said.

Jeweller Raj Kumar Khandelwal said those associated with this sector from across the country have shown keen interest in the jhumka following Bhosle's demise.

"The song has once again come into focus, and people are asking about jhumka designs," he said, adding that even food grain traders were placing requests for such designs.

Sanjeev Kumar "Sonu", who runs the Rail Cafe at Izzatnagar in Bareilly, said visitors frequently inquire about the jhumka market.

"Passengers coming to the cafe often ask about where they can find jhumkas in Bareilly," he said.

Pratiksha Harshit Khandelwal, a senior executive at a multinational company, said her friend in Bengaluru recently listened to the iconic song after Bhosle's passing and asked her to gift a Bareilly jhumka on her birthday.

"I have bought a jhumka set for the first time on Akshaya Tritiya," she said.

City resident professor Dr Archana Singh said jhumka sets are popular gift items. "I often gift jhumka sets at weddings outside Bareilly, and they are highly appreciated."

Bareilly Mahanagar Bullion Association president Sanjeev Agarwal said the demand for jhumkas has seen a sudden rise after the news of Bhosle's demise on April 12.

"Purchases have picked up ahead of Akshaya Tritiya. While locals buy less, visitors often make it a point to purchase jhumkas," he said.

Agarwal added that a wide range of designs -- from traditional handcrafted meenakari and kan-chain jhumkas to modern styles in gold, diamond, kundan and polki -- are available in the city's markets.

Traders said the artificial jewellery market in areas like Arya Samaj Gali records daily business of Rs 5-Rs 8 lakh, with jhumkas priced from Rs 50 to Rs 20,000, while gold variants are sold as per prevailing bullion rates.

The jhumka trade in Bareilly owes much of its popularity to the iconic Asha Bhosle song, which continues to drive both cultural identity and commercial demand decades after its release, they said. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

From bombs to pressuring banks: US uses economic warfare on Iran

If the US and Iran aren't able to soon come to a deal to end the war or extend the ceasefire that expires next week, the Trump administration is setting the stage to shift its war campaign toward a more economic-focused effort aimed at choking Tehran into submission rather than relying on bombs alone.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told reporters at a White House briefing Wednesday that the US plans to ramp up economic pain on Iran, and said the new moves will be the "financial equivalent" of a bombing campaign.

The threat of secondary economic sanctions on countries doing business with people, firms, and ships under Iranian control — including allies like the United Arab Emirates and competitors like China — represents an escalation of sanctions that the US is already employing.

Bessent said the administration has "told companies, we have told countries that if you are buying Iranian oil, that if Iranian money is sitting in your banks, we are now willing to apply secondary sanctions, which is a very stern measure. And the Iranians should know that this is going to be the financial equivalent of what we saw in the kinetic activities."

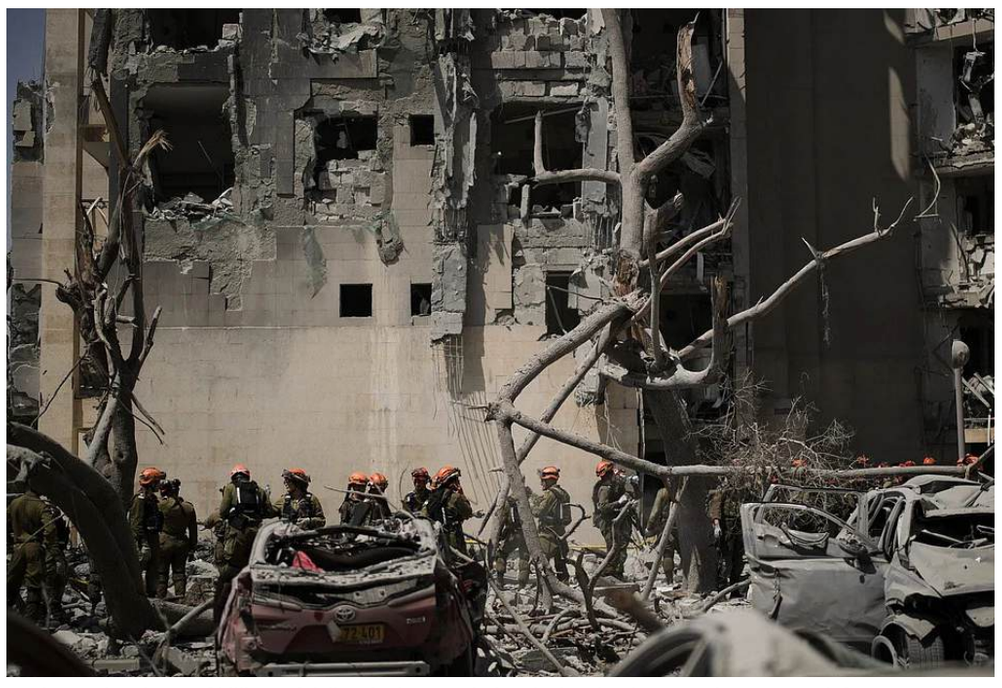
US WARNS CHINA, HONG KONG, UAE AND OMAN

The warning comes the day after the Treasury Department sent a letter to financial institutions in China, Hong Kong, the UAE, and Oman, threatening to levy secondary sanctions for doing business with Iran, and accusing those countries of allowing Iranian illicit activities to flow through their financial institutions.

It's part of an economic playbook that President Donald Trump still can use to pressure Iran to accept US proposals to limit its nuclear ambitions, a person familiar with the administration's thinking told The Associated Press. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss private discussions on the record.

Privately, the argument being made to Trump is that the Iranians think they can weather the storm but if they cannot pay their loyalists, that could pressure Iran to the table.

And some in the administration believe there are still more economic targets that can be hit that would put the economic hurt on Iran, including bonyads, the charitable trusts that account for a significant percentage of the Iranian economy.



Iran has endured tens of billions of dollars in damage during the bombardment to the country's infrastructure, including setbacks to its oil industry *—PTI*

Bessent told reporters that two Chinese banks have received warnings about handling Iranian money. Trump is preparing to visit Beijing next month for talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Bessent also said that Iran's Gulf neighbors are now willing to look at freezing Iranian money in their banks because of Iran's aggression during the war.

'MORE SANCTIONS COULD BE INEFFECTIVE'

Still, Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, the top Democrat on the Banking Committee, argued that any new economic sanctions would be effectively offset by the financial windfall that Iran was seeing in the aftermath of the war.

"Instead of circumstances where we can keep sanctions on Iran and constrict their economy, the blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, combined with the sharply rising price of oil, has helped Iran's economy," Warren said, adding, "What Secretary Bessent is trying to do is mop up the mess that Donald Trump has created by initiating this war."

Daniel Pickard, a sanctions attorney, said imposing secondary sanctions could result in "diplomatic and economic blowback" from allies that could hurt efforts to build coalitions against Tehran.

"A lot of our trading partners have been outspoken in regard to their opposition to the conflict in Iran," Pickard said. "Most economic sanctions professionals would agree that when you get more people on the team, the chances of your economic sanctions being effective or greater."

On Wednesday, the US imposed sanctions on an oil smuggling network connected to the deceased senior Iranian security official Ali Shamkhani, who was a close adviser to the former Supreme Leader of Iran. Sanctions include dozens of individuals, companies, and vessels involved in secretly transporting and selling Iranian and Russian oil through front companies, many of which are in the UAE.

"Treasury will continue to cut off Iran's illicit smuggling and terror proxy networks," Bessent said in a statement. "Financial institutions should be on notice that Treasury will leverage all tools and authorities, including secondary sanctions, against those that continue to support Tehran's terrorist activities.

US BELIEVES THE MOMENTUM HAS SHIFTED

Trump administration officials have also signalled growing confidence that the ceasefire and a blockade of shipments from Iranian ports in the Strait of Hormuz have shifted momentum in Trump's favour.

Iran has endured tens of billions of dollars in damage during the bombardment to the country's infrastructure, including setbacks to its oil industry, the heart of its fragile and long-isolated economy, that could take years to repair.

Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday said Trump "doesn't want to make, like, a small deal. He wants to make the grand bargain."

"That's the trade that he's offering," Vance said. "If you guys commit to not having a nuclear weapon, we are going to make Iran thrive." *—PTI*

2 plead not guilty in bomb attack at Mamdani's home

NEW YORK, 16 APRIL

Two men pleaded not guilty Wednesday to charges they brought homemade bombs to an anti-Islam protest outside New York City's Mayor Zohran Mamdani's home in a failed attempt at a terror attack inspired by the Islamic State group. Emir Balat, 18, and Ibrahim Kayumi, 19, entered the pleas during a brief appearance in federal court in Manhattan. Prosecutors say they travelled to attack a 7 March demonstration outside Gracie Mansion. The pair allegedly threw devices containing TATP and shrapnel, but the bombs failed to detonate. No injuries were reported. They later told police they were inspired by the Islamic State group. Dashcam footage captured them describing a plan to kill up to 60 people to "start terror," prosecutors said. —*PTI*

South African Oppn leader jailed for firing shots at rally

JOHANNESBURG, 16 APRIL

South African opposition leader Julius Malema was sentenced to five years in prison on Thursday after being convicted of breaking firearm laws by firing a rifle at a political rally in 2018. Malema was convicted in October on five counts, including unlawful possession of a firearm and reckless endangerment. Magistrate Twanet Olivier said the sentence reflected the seriousness of the offence. "We hear daily... random shots fired, killing people. It's just the first time that we hear, it's being called celebratory shots," she said. Malema argued the charges were politically motivated. The court rejected this, stating the verdict was based solely on his actions. His party remains the fourth-largest in South Africa's political landscape.—*PTI*

Nigeria on alert over planned attacks on jails

ABUJA, 16 APRIL

Nigeria's security forces are on high alert over a planned attack by Islamist militants on public infrastructure in Abuja and Niger states, an internal memo dated 13 April obtained from the Nigeria Customs Service on Wednesday showed. The planned targets include the international airport and a prison facility in the capital city of Abuja, as well as a military detention centre in neighbouring Niger state. "Their intention is to release detained terrorists and inflict significant damage on critical aviation infrastructure," the memo reads. The plan mirrors a similar attack in Niger Republic in January. "An analysis... suggests a possible intent by terrorists to replicate the attack patterns within Nigeria," the memo said. —*PTI*

— WIKIPEDIA

AI resurrects Val Kilmer for new film

LOS ANGELES, 16 APRIL

The filmmakers behind 'As Deep as the Grave', an upcoming historical drama, have resurrected late Hollywood star Val Kilmer through generative AI. Kilmer, who died last year after battling throat cancer, was to star as Father Finton, a Catholic priest and Native American spiritualist in the movie, but he was too ill to shoot his role. The film tells the story of Ann Axtell Morris and her excavation of the Canyon De Chelly in Arizona. With the cooperation of Kilmer's estate and his daughter Mercedes, the team used the technology to include him. "His family kept saying how important they thought the movie was and that Val really wanted to be a part of this," Coerte Voorhees said.—*PTI*

No dates for fresh talks: Pak as Munir visits Iran

Hegseth threatens to bomb energy infra if deal not reached

ISLAMABAD, 16 APRIL

Pakistan on Thursday said that no dates have been decided for the second round of talks between the US and Iran, even as Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir travelled to Tehran to meet with senior officials.

Notably, Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi didn't reject the possibility of a second round of talks. US President Donald Trump had earlier said that the talks would take place in Islamabad this week.

Meanwhile, Munir met Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, but the details of the conversation weren't immediately available. Munir arrived in Iran on Wednesday in an apparent bid to bring Iran and the US back to the negotiating table after the weekend talks in Islamabad failed to achieve a breakthrough.

Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir with Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, in Tehran, on Thursday —*PRESSTV*

Ghalibaf stressed the importance of a ceasefire in Lebanon when he spoke with his Lebanese counterpart Nabih Berri by phone, Iranian media reported.

"A ceasefire in Lebanon is as important to us as a ceasefire in Iran," he reportedly said.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Qatar as part of a regional visit. He had also visited Saudi Arabia. From Qatar, Sharif will travel to Turkey before returning home on Saturday.

With the US continuing to press its naval blockade over the Strait of Hormuz, Washington has amped up threats on Iran.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said that if Iran doesn't agree to a deal soon, the US and Israel will restart their bombing campaign.

"You can move things around, but you can't actually rebuild," Hegseth said of Iran's military prowess. "As you expose yourself with your movement to our watchful eye, we are locked and loaded on your critical dual use infrastructure, on your remaining power generation and on your energy industry."

However, Abdul Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Houthis in Yemen, said the US makes demands that are "impossible for any country to accept". —*Agencies*

Israeli soldiers drive to southern Lebanon amid massive airstrikes and shelling —*PTI*

Trump announces 10-day Israel & Lebanon ceasefire

WASHINGTON/TYRE, 15 APRIL

US President Donald Trump announced on Thursday that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to a 10-day ceasefire. It is unclear whether this was true or not, as Trump had earlier posted that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will speak to the Lebanese President, but Joseph Aoun refused the offer, citing the ongoing bombing.

However, Trump said on Truth Social that he spoke to Aoun and "Bibi" and that they agreed to the ceasefire. He noted that delegations from both countries met on Tuesday in Washington in the first direct talks in decades.

Trump said that Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio will work with Israel to achieve a "last peace".

"It has been my Honor to solve nine wars across the world, and this will be my 10th," Trump said, although it was unclear if was being ironic as he partly started the war.

Earlier in the day, Israel killed four medics killed in strikes across southern Lebanon.

The National News Agency reported that the Israel destroyed the Qasmiyeh Bridge over the Litani River in Lebanon, a crucial bridge that links the south with the north.

Israel has stated it intends to set up a "security zone" in Lebanese territory south of the Litani River, akin to annexation. —*Agencies*

'Prepared for anything'

Our goals and those of the US are identical: We want to see the enriched material removed from Iran, we want to see the cancellation of enrichment capabilities within Iran, and of course, we want to see the opening of the Straits. (But) It is too early to say how this matter will end, or even how it will progress. In anticipation of the possibility that fighting may resume, we are prepared for any scenario

-Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister

Ensure freedom of navigation through Hormuz: China to Iran

BEIJING, 16 APRIL

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has asked Iran to ensure freedom and safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, the first such call issued by Beijing.

"The current situation has reached a critical stage of transition between conflict and peace, and a window for peace is opening," Wang told Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, according to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Wang sought guarantees of freedom and safety of international navigation through the Strait.

However, Wang added that Iran, as a coastal state on the Strait, should have its sovereignty, security and legitimate rights and interests respected and safeguarded.

Araghchi said Tehran expected China to play an active role in promoting peace and ending the conflict, and that Iran was willing to continue seeking a rational and realistic solution through peaceful negotiations.

China is a close ally of Iran and the largest importer of Iranian oil, but is now also concerned by the US' blockade of the Strait. —*PTI*

B'desh seeks $2B from dvpt partners to meet energy demand

DHAKA, 16 APRIL

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has sought a USD 2 billion fund from development partners to meet the country's immediate energy needs, state-run BSS news agency reported.

"The situation demands urgency, solidarity, and decisive action," Tarique said during the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC) Plus Online Summit. "No nation, regardless of its size or strength, can overcome this challenge in isolation."

He said Bangladesh is concerned that the scale this crisis could exceed those of the 1970's oil shock, which triggered a decade of stalled development in the 1980s. —*ANI*

Europe has 6 weeks of jet fuel: Energy Head

PARIS, 16 APRIL

Europe has "maybe 6 weeks or so (of) jet fuel left," said Fatih Birol, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) on Thursday. He warned of possible flight cancellations "soon" if oil supplies remain blocked, terming it "the largest energy crisis we have ever faced".

Birol said some parts of the world will be "hit worse than the others. The front line is Asian countries like Japan, Korea, India, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh, he added. Only then the effects of the war will come to "Europe and the Americas".

"The longer it goes, the worse it will be for the economic growth and inflation around the world," he added, noting that the impact will be "higher petrol (gasoline) prices, higher gas prices, high electricity prices" —*PTI*

Republicans foil bid to end Iran war

The Republican-led Senate on Wednesday rejected the latest Democratic attempt to halt Trump's war in Iran, turning aside a resolution that would require the US to withdraw forces from the conflict until Congress authorises further action. The 47-52 vote was the fourth time this year that the Senate has voted to cede its war powers to the President

US warns of sanctions on UAE, China

The US Treasury Department sent a letter to financial institutions in China, Hong Kong, the UAE, and Oman, threatening to levy secondary sanctions for doing allegedly handling transactions related to Iran. The letter stated that the Department had evidence that Tehran processed roughly $9 billion in 2024 through "US correspondent accounts using a series of front companies".

Massive blaze at Australian oil refinery

A large fire broke out at one of Australia's two operating oil refineries - prompting fears over the country's petrol supplies. The blaze at the Viva Energy facility in Geelong was extinguished and no injuries were reported. Energy Minister Chris Bowen says the facility is still producing diesel and jet fuel but "at reduced levels". The facility produce about 10 per cent of Australia's oil.

Saudi to invest $925 billion in domestic dvpt

Saudi Arabia has announced a $925 billion sovereign wealth fund to develop itself domestically as it looks to diversify its reliance on oil, Public Investment Fund Governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan said. The model is part of the Kingdom's five-year plan and that "local investment should be 80 per cent and we aim for international investment to be 20 per cent".

Qatari Emir stresses de-escalation to Trump

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani called for de-escalation in a phone conversation with Trump, a statement from the Emir's office said. The two leaders also discussed impact of escalating tensions in West Asia on global energy markets and international supply chains. The Emir emphasised the need to pursue diplomatic solutions.

Digital Euro: The future of cash in Europe

The European Central Bank (ECB) is working towards launch of the digital euro – an electronic version of public money – with the aim of providing a safe, secure public option for making digital payments. Already, more than **130 countries** are exploring or have already launched their own digital currency. China leads the pack with its digital yuan – also known as the digital renminbi – which has seen more than 7 trillion yuan in transactions and is used in over **26 cities.**

Timeline

- **2026-2027:** Pilot projects to launch in several European countries.
- **2028:** A limited use programme will be launched for selected businesses and citizens.
- **2029:** Possible official issuance of the digital euro throughout the Eurozone.

What is digital Euro?

The digital Euro is an electronic form of public money issued by the European Central Bank (ECB), stored in a virtual wallet. Unlike a bank balance, it does not depend on any private institution's solvency. It works only as a payment method — no loans or investments — and can function offline.

It ensures neither governments nor central banks can access citizens' balances or transactions. In offline mode, even though access is restricted, the digital Euro's privacy protections are broadly comparable to cash. Europe has said that its model won't be similar to the Chinese digital yuan, which allows the government to see every transaction made by its users.

Risks and safeguards

A payment network covering millions of Europeans is a prime target for cyberattacks. Besides, this could reduce banks' ability to grant loans, which is one of their core businesses. To safeguard the banking system, the ECB will cap the digital euro at around **€3,000 per person.** Accessibility remains a concern too — with 21 per cent of Europeans aged 16–74 lacking basic digital skills, inclusive design will be critical to its success.

Pak-based LeT co-founder injured in Lahore attack

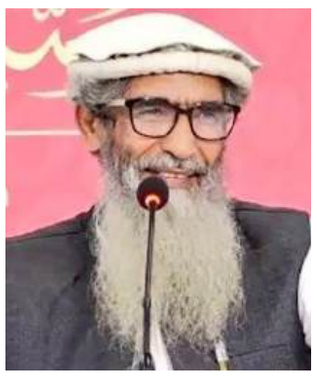
LAHORE, 16 APRIL

Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group's co-founder **Amir Hamza** was allegedly shot at by motorcycle-borne unidentified gunmen in Lahore on Thursday, police said.

Hamza is regarded as LeT's second most important leader after its chief Hafiz Saeed, who has been in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail since 2019 after being convicted in terror financing cases.

The gunmen allegedly opened fire on private TV channel 24NewsHD TV's vehicle, owned by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

Retd Justice Nazir Ahmed Ghazi and Hamza were in the vehicle, but the former was unhurt. Ghazi hosts the religious programme 'Noor-e-Sehar'.



Hamza has been designated as a terrorist by the US.

Police said they have launched a probe into the incident. —*PTI*

DEADLIEST IN WEEKS

Russian bombardment kills 16 in Ukraine

KYIV, 16 APRIL

Russia hammered civilian areas of Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles, killing at least 16 people and injuring more than 80 others, officials said on Thursday. The attack, which stretched from daytime into the night, was the biggest aerial barrage in almost two weeks.

Russia launched nearly 700 drones and dozens of ballistic and cruise missiles, primarily targeting civilians, authorities said.

Moscow's forces have hit civilian areas almost daily during the four-year war. More than 15,000 Ukrainian civilians have died in the strikes, the UN stated.

Russia launched nearly 700 drones and dozens of ballistic missiles across Ukraine in the largest attack in two weeks—@ZELENSKAUA

Nine people were killed and 23 injured in the southern port city of Odesa, three were killed and around three dozen injured in the central Dnipro region, and one person was killed in Zaporizhzhia in the south.

At least four people were killed in Kyiv, including a 12-year-old, with more than 50 others injured.

The bombardment came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy went to Germany, Norway and Italy this week to seek air defence systems that can stop Russian missiles. Kyiv fears that the Iran war is burning through stockpiles of the advanced American-made systems it needs.

"Another night has proven that Russia does not deserve any easing of global policy or lifting of sanctions," Zelenskyy said on X, referring to the US' temporary waiver on Russian oil sanctions. —*PTI*

Rupee rises to settle at 93.23 against USD

MUMBAI, 16 APRIL

The rupee strengthened by 10 paise to settle at 93.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, following a decline in global crude oil prices amid hopes of a truce in West Asia.n However, sustained outflow of foreign capital amid increased dollar demand from importers capped the gain in the local currency, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 93.29 and touched an intraday high of 93.16 against the greenback. It also fell to the day's low of 93.35. Meanwhile, the dollar index surged by 0.18 per cent at 98.03. Brent crude was trading up 1.65 per cent at USD 96.50 per barrel in futures trade. *—PTI*

Alembic gets USFDA nod for cancer injection

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Thursday said it has received final approval from the Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) for its generic version of methotrexate injection, used in the treatment of various types of cancers and arthritis. Methotrexate Injection is indicated for neoplastic diseases, including acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and meningeal leukaemia. It is also used in the treatment of Osteosarcoma, breast cancer, squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck, the company added. The injection is also indicated for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis and severe psoriasis. Alembic Pharmaceuticals received Abbreviated New Drug Application approval for its Methotrexate injection (50 mg/2 ml multidose vials and 1g/40 ml single-dose vials). *—PTI*

GAIL to set up solar power project in Uttar Pradesh

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

GAIL (India) Limited has signed contract agreements with TUSCO Limited to set up a 600 MW solar power project at TUSCO's Solar Park in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, as part of its push towards expanding its renewable energy portfolio. The project will also include a 550 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), aimed at enhancing energy reliability and supporting efficient utilisation of solar power. The company stated that the project's solar power will primarily meet the captive energy needs of GAIL's Pata petrochemical plant in Auraiya, Uttar Pradesh. It will also help meet additional energy demand arising from the electrification of gas-based equipment and compressed biogas (CBG) plants being set up in the state *—ANI*

Silver climbs Rs 2.5L/kg, gold falls Rs 1.57L/10g

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Silver price climbed Rs 1,700 to Rs 2.58 lakh per kilogram in Delhi on Thursday due to steady demand and firm global trends, even as investors tracked geopolitical developments and currency movements. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal jumped Rs 1,700, or nearly 1 per cent, to Rs 2,58,700 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) . However, gold of 99.9 per cent slipped Rs 200 to Rs 1,57,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). A recovery in the dollar and US Treasury bond yields limited gains in the precious metals. *—PTI*

Markets bearish as Sensex drops 700 pts from day's high

Nifty falls 188.8 pts amid profit-taking in financial shares

MUMBAI, 16 APRIL

Stock markets closed lower in a volatile session on Thursday with the benchmark Sensex declining by nearly 700 points from the day's high, dragged by profit-taking in banking and financial shares after a recent sharp rally.

The BSE Sensex was down 634.91 points from the day's high and ended 122.56 points lower or 0.16 per cent to settle at 77,988.68.. The index opened higher and hit a high of 78,730.32 in late-morning trading. However, profit-taking emerged at higher levels, dragging the index down to a low of 77,674.93. The index gyrated 1,055.39 points during the session.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 188.80 points to 25,688.05. The index moved between a high of 24,400.95 and a low of 24,102.80 during the session.

Among the 30-Sensex firms, HDFC Bank fell the most by 1.75 per cent. Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Bajaj Finance were the major laggards.

Trent, Eternal, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics and Infosys were among the major winners.

WORLD MARKETS

DOW (US)	48,568.53	(0.17%)
S&P 500 (US)	7,050.60	(6.65 %)
Nasdaq (US)	23,908.23	(0.41%)
Nikkei (Japan)	59,518.34	(2.38%)
Hang Seng (China)	26,394.27	(1.72%)
DAX (Germany)	24,178.81	(0.49%)
FTSE 100 (UK)	10, 635.16	(0.72%)
CAC 40 (Paris)	8,312.31	(0.67%)
KOSPI S Korea	6,226.05	(2.21%)

"From a macro perspective, sentiment remains sensitive to developments in the Iran War. The market's inability to hold gains suggests that investors remain cautious and are not yet willing to chase the rally aggressively," Hariprasad K, research analyst and founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Broader markets closed higher with the BSE MidCap Select index climbing 0.86 per cent and the SmallCap Select index gaining 0.60 per cent. Sectorally, the trend remained mixed, with metals, IT, and energy stocks supporting the index, while banking and auto stocks faced some pressure. Markets in Europe were trading in positive territory. US markets ended mostly higher on 15 April. *—PTI*

Nikkei hits record high

Asian stocks mostly gained on Thursday, with Japan's Nikkei hitting record high while oil prices steadied over expectations of an extension of a ceasefire in the Iran war and hopes for more talks between the US and Iran. Investors took cue from a record close on Wall Street. Nikkei 225 jumped 2.4% to its all-time high of 59,549.59. Gains were led by technology and chip-related stocks, as continued optimism around artificial intelligence demand boosted sentiment.*—PTI*

FY26 PROFIT AT RS 13,197 CR

Wipro Q4 profit slides 1.8% to Rs 3,502 crore

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Wipro on Thursday reported 1.89 per cent decline in March quarter FY26 consolidated net profit at Rs 3,501.8 crore. The IT company's profit in the year-ago period stood at Rs 3,569.6 crore.

Revenue from operations rose 7.6 per cent to Rs 24,236.3 crore in the fourth quarter of FY26, according to a regulatory filing. As compared to previous December quarter, profit and revenue rose by 12.2 per cent and 2.8 per cent, respectively. For full fiscal year, Wipro recorded a net profit of Rs 13,197.4 crore, reflecting a marginal 0.47 per cent increase from 2024-25. FY26 revenue stood 3.96 per cent higher at Rs 92,624 crore.

"To strengthen our position in an AI-first world, we are pivoting to a services-as-a-software model through the AI Native Business & Platforms unit. Our strategic deal with the Olam Group further reflects the decisive investments we are making to capture opportunities at scale," Wipro CEO and MD Srini Pallia said. Shares of Wipro settled 0.19 per cent higher at Rs 210.20 apiece on the BSE on Thursday.

WIPRO BOARD APPROVES SHARE BUYBACK

Wipro's board on Thursday approved a mega Rs 15,000 crore share repurchase programme, proposing to buy back more than 5 per cent of its equity, or up to 60 crore shares, from shareholders at Rs 250 per share.

The share buyback price reflects a premium of around 18 per cent over the previous closing price of Rs 210.20 per share on BSE. The company has formed a committee to oversee and implement the buyback process *—PTI*

Amid Iran war, aviation sector faces Rs 18K cr loss

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The ongoing West Asia conflict has significantly impacted India's aviation, tourism and hospitality sectors, leading to a 15-20 per cent decline in inbound tourist traffic and an estimated net loss of Rs 18,000 crore for the aviation industry, a report by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) said.

The report, titled "Impact of the West Asia Conflict on India's Tourism, Aviation & Hospitality Sectors," highlighted widespread disruptions across key segments, even as strong domestic demand continues to provide some stability.

India's tourism and hospitality sector, which contributes nearly 8 per cent to GDP and supports over 40 million jobs, had witnessed a strong recovery in 2025. However, fresh geopolitical tensions in early 2026 have introduced new volatility.

The aviation sector has emerged as the most affected, with airlines facing flight cancellations, airspace restrictions and rerouting of international flights.

These disruptions have increased flying time by 2-4 hours on key routes, leading to higher fuel consumption and operating costs. Fuel accounts for 35-40 per cent of airline operating costs. *—ANI*

RS 40K CR LOAN FRAUD

Reliance denies association with Jhunjhunwala after ED arrest

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

A day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group's former senior executive Amitabh Jhunjhunwala in a money laundering case, Reliance Power on Thursday denied having any association with him after 2019.

The probe pertains to an alleged bank loan fraud perpetrated through Anil Ambani group companies like Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd (RHFL) using shell or dummy companies. The case stems from FIRs filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Jhunjhunwala had been a director of Reliance Capital Ltd, the holding company of RHFL and RCFL, from March 2003 to September 2019.

ED also arrested former senior executive Amit Bapna in an alleged bank loan fraud and money laundering case.

The company said Bapna too left the Reliance Group in December 2019. He served as chief financial officer of Reliance Capital, as well as director of Reliance Home Finance.

Reliance Infrastructure and Reliance Power have a combined investor base of approximately 50 lakh shareholders and serve millions of customers.

SC REJECTS ANIL AMBANI'S PLEAS

The Supreme Court on Thursday dismissed the pleas of industrialist Anil Ambani challenging the Bombay High Court order that allowed the proceedings initiated by banks against him and Reliance Communications Ltd to classify their bank accounts as fraud to continue.

The top court permitted Ambani to pursue his plea before the high court's single judge bench against the banks' show cause notices to declare the accounts as fraud.

It directed the single judge bench to expeditiously decide Ambani's plea against the show cause notices issued by Indian Overseas Bank, IDBI and Bank of Baroda. *—PTI*

Govt to launch 15th commercial coal mine auction

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The Coal Ministry will launch the 15th round of commercial coal mine auction and organise a stakeholder consultation on Friday, as part of efforts to boost private sector participation in coal production.

The consultation, to be held in Mumbai, will bring together industry players, investors and state government representatives to discuss auction modalities, mining reforms and opportunities in the commercial coal block framework.

This tranche marks a significant development in the government's coal sector liberalisation drive, initiated in 2020, with 14 previous rounds offering over 100 blocks and attracting significant investments.

Building on the success of commercial coal mine auctions, the coal ministry is advancing India's energy sector through greater production, efficiency and self-reliance.

The upcoming round of auction continues this progressive journey, offering coal mines under the most liberal terms to promote ease of doing business, attract diverse investments, and encourage wider industry participation.

The latest auction will offer a fresh set of fully explored and partially explored coal blocks, the Ministry said. This will further energise the coal sector by fostering a vibrant and competitive ecosystem, paving the way for enhanced investments, employment generation and overall growth. *—PTI*

Singapore Airlines CEO, Tata officials to meet over AI

MUMBAI, 16 APRIL

Singapore Airlines CEO **Goh Choon Phong** will meet senior Tata Group executives on Thursday to have detailed discussions on loss-making Air India. Tata Group acquired.

According to sources, the airline is expected to have incurred more than Rs 22,000 crore loss in the financial year ended March 31, 2026.

Tata Group acquired Air India from the Indian government in January 2022, and later Singapore Airlines purchased a 25.1 per cent stake.

According to reports, the

Singapore Airlines CEO will meet Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran.

The meeting gains significance as Air India faces multiple headwinds, including spiralling operating costs caused by airspace curbs linked to the Iran war and the closure of Pakistan's airspace. *—PTI*

Vedanta challenges Adani's Rs 14,535 cr Jaypee deal

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Thursday heard detailed submissions on behalf of Vedanta Limited challenging the approval of Adani Enterprises' Rs 14,535-crore resolution plan for Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL).

Vedanta argued that the Committee of Creditors' (CoC) evaluation framework resulted in a "distorted outcome," where lower-value bids were ranked above its significantly higher offer exceeding Rs 17,000 crore. It said that the scoring mechanism lacked transparency, consistency, and a clear linkage to value maximisation. The final assessment ignored the identified criteria, reducing it to a mechanical process. *—PTI*

Sebi extends NPO registration validity on SSE

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Markets regulator Sebi has extended the registration validity for not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) on the Social Stock Exchange (SSE) allowing their enrolment as NPOs for three years without raising funds.

The moves are aimed at promoting the SSE and facilitating ease of fundraising and encouraging greater participation by NPOs

Sebi has taken into account practical challenges faced by NPOs, including delays in statutory and regulatory approvals.

The regulator has lowered the minimum subscription requirement for Zero Coupon Zero Principal instruments to 50 per cent from 75 per cent to enhance fundraising flexibility for NPOs.

This relaxation would apply only to projects where costs and outcomes can be implemented on a clearly identifiable per-unit basis, ensuring that partial subscription does not adversely affect project execution.

In such cases, SSEs would carry out due diligence to ensure that funds raised at the lower subscription threshold can still be meaningfully deployed towards the stated objectives. funds would be refunded to investors if the minimum subscription requirement is not met. *—PTI*

'INDIANA JONES' OF MARKETS

Veteran investor Mark Mobius dies at 89

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

Mark Mobius, a pioneer in emerging markets (EMs) investing, has died on Wednesday at the age of 89, according to a statement on his LinkedIn page.

Known as the 'Indiana Jones of emerging markets' for his willingness to unlock new, sometimes risky jurisdictions, Mobius relished the challenge. "Volatility," he wrote in 'Passport to Profits', one of his many books, "is not an enemy to fear but a sign that opportunity is close at hand."

Having invested in EMs for decades, Mobius was pushing for new opportunities in January.

His convictions shaped a generation of fund managers and helped draw billions of dollars into markets dismissed as marginal.

Mark Mobius was known for unlocking new, but risky jurisdictions *-PTI*

His books, which were part travelogue and part tutorial, presented a human view of global finance. He considered on-the-ground observation to be more vital than abstract theory.

As executive chairman of Templeton Emerging Markets Group, Mobius traveled al lo in search of undervalued businesses and underappreciated economies. He claimed to have visited at least 112 countries.

He became the public face of emerging-markets investing just as the asset class was taking shape. His calm manner and knowledge reassured investors who were uneasy about political risk, currency volatility and opaque governance.

Joseph Bernhard Mark Mobius was born to Puerto Rican and German parents in Hempstead, New York, he received a PhD in economics from MIT in 1964 with a thesis about communication satellites.

He first went to school for fine arts, and in his life worked at a talent agency, as a teacher and as a marketer of Snoopy products in Asia. He was also a political consultant. John Ninia and Eric Nguyen, partners at Mobius Investments, will assume leadership responsibilities. *—.Agencies*

India's trade gap may widen amid oil, global risks: Report

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

While India's March 2026 trade deficit came in lower than expected, Yes Securities has cautioned that underlying factors point to a likely widening in the coming months, driven by external shocks, slowing global demand, and structural pressures on the import bill.

The report noted that "India's March trade deficit surprised at only USD 21 bn," aided by a temporary compression in imports and a sequential recovery in exports. However, it emphasised that this improvement may not be sustained.

A major reason for the smaller deficit was a sharp drop in imports, especially gold and oil. Gold imports fell to about USD 3.1 billion, and oil imports declined to around USD 12.2 billion.

The report noted,"The drop... may be attributed to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz which disrupted supply," indicating supply-side constraints rather than structural correction.

On the export side, the outlook remains fragile. Despite a month-on-month pickup, exports contracted by 7.3 per cent YoY in March, reflecting weak global demand conditions.

"We expect CAD to widen to USD 70.1 bn (1.6 per cent of GDP) in FY27," the report said, with risks tilted to the upside. *—PTI*

In-form Gujarat Titans eye first home win vs KKR

KKR is still searching for its first win of the season

AHMEDABAD, 16 APRIL

An under-pressure Kolkata Knight Riders would be hoping to arrest their steep slide against a resurgent Gujarat Titans in the Indian Premier League here on Friday.

Under captain Ajinkya Rahane and coach Abhishek Nayar, KKR have struggled for clarity, slumping to four defeats in five matches and still searching for their first win of the season.

Gujarat Titans, too, are yet to win at home, having lost their only game here to Rajasthan Royals, but since then, they have bounced back with two morale-boosting away wins.

Their bowling has looked settled, with Prasidh Krishna delivering in the middle and death overs, and Rashid Khan rediscovering rhythm.

With Shubman Gill and Jos Buttler finding form, the Gujarat Titans head into the contest with far greater balance and confidence.

It's their misfortune that their bowling had weakened significantly before the tournament, following the injury setbacks to Harshit Rana and Akash Deep and the release of Mustafizur Rahman on BCCI instructions.

But the bigger concern was the dip in form of their spin mainstays Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy. The Indian spinner is still in the struggle phase and has yet to take a wicket this season.

KKR's problems have also been compounded by questionable decisions on and off the field. Leaving out players like Tim Seifert and Rachin Ravindra has raised eyebrows, while their choices after winning the toss have been baffling.

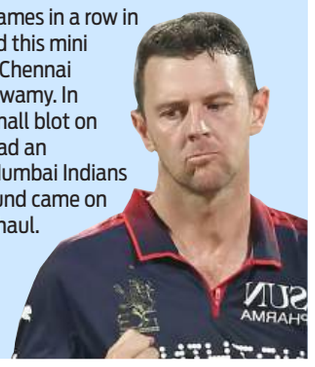
Punjab Kings and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh became the 31st player to take 100 wickets in IPL during the match against Mumbai Indians –PTI

In the rain-hit washout against the Punjab Kings, Rahane surprised everyone by choosing to bat, while against the Chennai Super Kings, he opted to bowl first on a surface that clearly favoured the bowlers. Their first match defeat to the Mumbai Indians after failing to defend a 220 set the tone, and the heavy 65-run loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad at home only deepened the slide. Match starts: 7.30 pm. —PTI

Chennai Super Kings pacer Khaleel Ahmed has been ruled out of the IPL due to a quadriceps injury –PTI

How the pace unit has turned RCB into a fearsome all-weather unit

Royal Challengers Bengaluru have upended the history book to win three home games in a row in IPL 2026, and their pacers' immaculate outing is the most gratifying factor behind this mini streak. The RCB bowlers conquered opponents as varied as Sunrisers Hyderabad, Chennai Super Kings, and Lucknow Super Giants with comfortable margins at the Chinnaswamy. In contrast, RCB had lost three home matches during IPL 2025, and it remained a small blot on an otherwise fabulous run to their maiden title. Before this season started, RCB had an unflattering record of 46 defeats and 45 wins here from 96 matches, unlike the Mumbai Indians or CSK, whose home grounds are generally their fortress. The first hint of turnaround came on March 28 when Jacob Duffy barged through SRH's top-order with a three-wicket haul. Duffy was a back-up option for rehabilitating Josh Hazlewood, but no less in pedigree, as he had held the No. 1 spot in the ICC T20 rankings for bowlers back in 2025. He's got pace, he's got bounce, and he moves sideways. Duffy's height and high delivery point add to the arsenal he brings to the mix. It can be a key factor.



BAYERN SEEMED UNFAZED

Bayern's Luis Diaz celebrates his crucial late goal against Real Madrid in Munich –X/@ BAYERN

Bayern knock Real Madrid out of CL in QF classic

LONDON, 16 APRIL

Bayern Munich scored two late goals to knock record 15-time European champions Real Madrid out of the Champions League following a thrilling 4-3 win at the Allianz Arena on Wednesday night.

Madrid took the lead three times on the night to level the tie, but Bayern responded each time in front of their home fans in Munich. Luis Diaz's 89th-minute goal, moments after Eduardo Camavinga's red card, finally saw Madrid off before Michael Olise added gloss.

The quarterfinal second leg ended in acrimony with Madrid's players furious that referee Slavko Vincic sent off Eduardo Camavinga with a second yellow card for an innocuous-looking foul on Harry Kane after being urged to do so by the Bayern players in the 86th minute.

Luis Díaz fired inside the right post three minutes later, and Michael Olise ended the contest definitively with a shot in off the far post in stoppage time to give Bayern a 6-4 win on aggregate after the Bavarian powerhouse won the first leg of its quarterfinal 2-1 in Madrid last week.

Madrid's players surrounded Vincic after the game. Arda Güler, who scored two brilliant goals to spark the visitors' hopes of a famed "remontada" (comeback), was shown a red card for his vehement complaints.

Kylian Mbappé also found the net for Madrid in a frenetic first half that ended 3-2 to Madrid, with Aleksandar Pavlovic and Harry Kane, with his 50th Bayern goal of the season, responding for the German champions.

The victory also snapped a run of four straight defeats to Madrid in the Champions League knockout stages. It condemned the Spanish giants to quarterfinal exits in successive seasons for the first time.

In Munich, Güler had opened the scoring after just 34 seconds thanks to a mistake from Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, who was outstanding in the first leg, whose attempted pass went straight to the 21-year-old Turkey star, who did not delay but fired the ball into the empty net from distance.

Bayern seemed unfazed, and Pavlovic equalized with a point-blank header from a Joshua Kimmich corner in the sixth minute. Bayern maintained its dominance, with Madrid patiently looking for breaks.

Konrad Laimer did well to block Mbappé, who had an adhesive bandage above his right eye after getting a heavy blow to his face last weekend. —PTI

Arjun, Aditya win another gold at the US Open

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

Arjun Singh combined with Aditya Singh to win the men's doubles 5.0 event at the US Open Pickleball Championship by getting the better of J Meode and W Lin 9-11, 11-2, 11-7) in the final in Naples, Florida. Another Indian pair to bag a medal was Panth Thakkar and Atharva Sheth, who took home a silver in the 4.5 men's doubles category, after losing the summit clash to Caian Appel and Michael Van Dusen 8-11, 9-11. Winning another gold at the US Open is very rewarding, and to do it together once again makes it extra special. We will continue to work hard to repeat these results with the support of our family and everyone around us.—PTI

Shubhankar fires 64 to close in on a win at Boulders Classic

HYDERABAD, 16 APRIL

Overnight leader Shubhankar Sharma fired a sizzling eight-under 64 to build a mammoth seven-shot lead after round three of the inaugural Rs 1 crore Boulders Classic here on Thursday. The 29-year-old Shubhankar (66-66-64), a two-time DP World Tour winner, matched the course record set by Honey Baisoya a day earlier. He is now at 20-under 196 with one round to go at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club. Sharma's round featured nine birdies and just one bogey as he took firm control heading into the final day. Delhi's Rashid Khan (67-70-66), Chandigarh's Angad Cheema (68-69-66), and first-round leader Vishesh Sharma (65-70-68) of Hyderabad were tied second at 13-under 203.—PTI

SOUTH AFRICA SERIES

Great chance to prepare for T20 WC: Kaur

DURBAN, 28 JAN

Emphasising the need to give all players adequate opportunities ahead of the T20 World Cup, India captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Thursday said her side is confident and keen to make the most of the five-match T20I series against South Africa, starting here on Friday.

Harmanpreet also said that her side is brimming with confidence following their ODI World Cup triumph. India recently registered T20I series wins over Australia and Sri Lanka.

The skipper stressed that the matches against South Africa would offer a valuable opportunity to fine-tune combinations and build momentum ahead of the global event to be held in England and Wales from June 12 to July 5.

"We want to take this opportunity very seriously and play our best cricket here. It's a great chance for us to come together and prepare well before the World Cup," Harmanpreet said at the pre-series press conference.

India features in Group A alongside Australia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Africa, and the Netherlands.

Harmanpreet underlined that giving opportunities to all players in the five-match series would be a priority.

"These matches are important to ensure all players get equal opportunities so that we are fully ready as a unit going into the World Cup. At the same time, we are here to win," she noted. —PTI

Anwar Ali and Saul Crespo were the other scorers for the Red and Gold Brigade as the 10-man side –X/EASTBENGAL

Sojberg's late equaliser helps 10-man EB rescue draw

BENGALURU, 16 APRIL

Danish forward Anton Sojberg became the latest hero for East Bengal as he scored late to rescue a 3-3 draw with Bengaluru FC on Thursday at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata in the Indian Super League 2025-26.

Anwar Ali and Saul Crespo were the other scorers for the Red and Gold Brigade as the 10-man side fought bravely to bag a point.

For the Blues, Ryan Williams, Ashique Kuruniyan, and Suresh Singh Wangjam netted.

The complexion of the match seemed to change in the first half when East Bengal's Miguel Ferreira was shown a red card for misconduct. But Oscar Bruzon and Co. managed to eke out a result.—PTI

MCA announces player contract system ahead of 2026-2027 season

MUMBAI, 16 APRIL

In a bid to professionalise and streamline its structure ahead of the 2026-2027 season, Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Thursday announced a player contract system, becoming the first state cricket body to introduce such an arrangement.

The players in Grade A are set to be paid Rs 12 lakhs to Rs 20 lakhs per annum, whereas the Grade B players will be paid Rs 8 lakhs to Rs 12 lakhs. The players to be placed in Grade C will be paid Rs 8 lakhs per annum.

"This initiative ushers in a new era by providing financial security, professional structure, and long-term development pathways for emerging cricketers," the MCA said in a statement. "Mumbai becomes one of the first state associations in India to formalise such a system. —PTI

MANNINGER DIES AGED 48 AFTER A CAR-TRAIN COLLISION

SALZBURG, 16 APRIL

Former Austria goalkeeper Alex Manninger, who played for Arsenal and a string of Italian clubs, died in a road accident on Thursday aged 48, the Austrian Football Association (OEFB) said.

The Kronen Zeitung and other media reported that Manninger's vehicle was hit by a passenger train at an unmanned crossing near the Austrian city of Salzburg.

Manninger made 33 appearances for Austria and played for Arsenal, mainly as a reserve, between 1997 and 2001. He ended his career at Liverpool during the 2016-17 season. In Italy, he played for Fiorentina, Torino, Bologna, Siena, Udinese, and Juventus.

"Alexander Manninger was an outstanding ambassador of Austrian football on and off the pitch," OEFB sporting director Peter Schöttel said in a statement. "With his international career, he set standards, inspired, and shaped many young goalkeepers. His professionalism, calmness, and reliability made him an important part of his teams and the national side." —PTI

Vaishali's quiet confidence in World Championship quest

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

The newly-crowned Candidates champion R. Vaishali, a soft-spoken and unassuming presence often seen with her mother by her side, stands out for her quiet intensity, shaped by strong values and a grounded upbringing, the kind of Indian sportsperson who lets her game do the talking.

What truly shapes her is the ecosystem she comes from a deeply committed chess family that has quietly nurtured excellence without seeking the spotlight, and in that understated, almost self-effacing journey lies her greatest strength. On Wednesday, Vaishali, the lowest-rated player in the eight-woman field at the Candidates tournament in Paphos, Cyprus, let her quiet game do the talking, springing a fine victory over Kateryna Lagno to seal a place in the World Championship showdown against Ju Wenjun later this year. For long, Vaishali, 24, had lived in the shadow of her younger and more celebrated brother, R. Praggnanandhaa, who had qualified for the Open section of the Candidates tournament, but a string of underwhelming performances knocked him out of contention early in the 14-round competition, ending his hopes of challenging D. Gukesh for the world title later this year. —PTI

India's Rameshbabu Vaishali made history by winning the FIDE Women's Candidates 2026 title in Cyprus – PTI

–PTI

GOVT TO CRIMINALISE PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

NDTL to be assessed in next few months: Banka

NEW DELHI, 16 APRIL

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) President Witold Banka on Thursday said that the performance of India's National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) here would be assessed in the next few months, a process that the NADA described as routine.

In a press conference after the Global Anti-Doping Intelligence and Investigations Network (GAIIN) Final Conference here, Banka was asked whether NDTL's performance would be audited. He replied in the affirmative.

"Assessment of results in India will be done in the next few months," he said.

"NDTL is WADA-accredited, and it is a routine process to assess the performance of the lab. The accrediting authority will do it," the source said.

NDTL was suspended from 2019 to 2021 after a site visit by WADA officials ruled that it had non-conformities with international standards.

Banka, however, was satisfied with what he observed during his visit to the facility earlier this week.

Govt to criminalise prohibited substances: Mandaviya

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said the government is working towards legislation that would criminalise trafficking and administration of prohibited performance-enhancing substances to athletes.

Speaking at the World Anti-Doping Agency's Global Anti-Doping Intelligence and Investigations Network (GAIIN) Final Conference here, the minister said India, which has topped the global list of dope offenders for the past three years, would aggressively tackle the menace that casts a massive shadow on its aspirations of hosting the Olympics in 2036.

"We are working on introducing criminal provisions for athlete support staff or other persons involved in trafficking and administering banned substances," Mandaviya said, making it apparent that coaches who are found encouraging the use of banned substances by athletes would be among those at the receiving end. —PTI

FO prize money up 10% to $72 million overall

PARIS, 16 APRIL

French Open prize money has increased by about 10% for an overall pot of 61.7 million euros ($72.1 million).

The total amount is up 5.3 million euros from last year. Play begins on Sunday, May 24 at Roland Garros in western Paris. Men's and women's singles champions each receive 2.8 million euros and the runners-up 1.4 million euros. Semifinalists earn 750,000 euros and first round losers get 87,000 euros. Men's and women's doubles winners pocket 600,000 euros and the mixed doubles champions get 122,000 euros. Last year, Carlos Alcaraz staged an epic comeback to beat Jannik Sinner in a five-set final and Coco Gauff defeated Aryna Sabalenka for the women's title.

There will be an opening ceremony before the men's and women's finals, lasting about six minutes, with French choreographer Benjamin Millepied in charge of the program. Also for the first time, players can wear data-collecting portable devices on court in order to gain information on their physical performances. —PTI